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No. 6, Vol. 21 TWICE-A-MONTH 15 CENTS

The Popular Magazine

REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

FIRST OCT. NUMBER OUT-SEPT. 10, 1911

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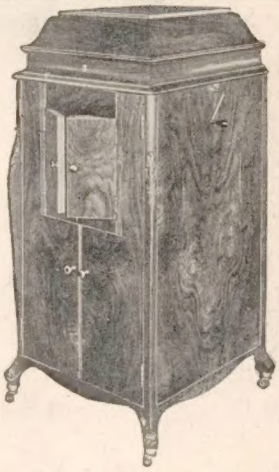

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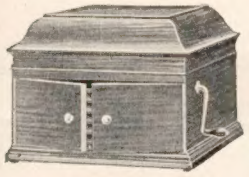

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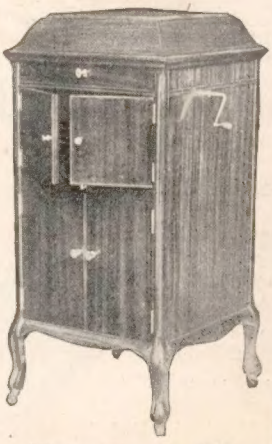

Victor-Victrola XIV
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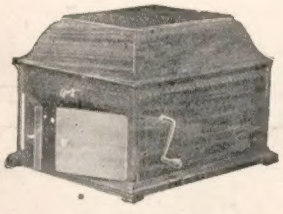

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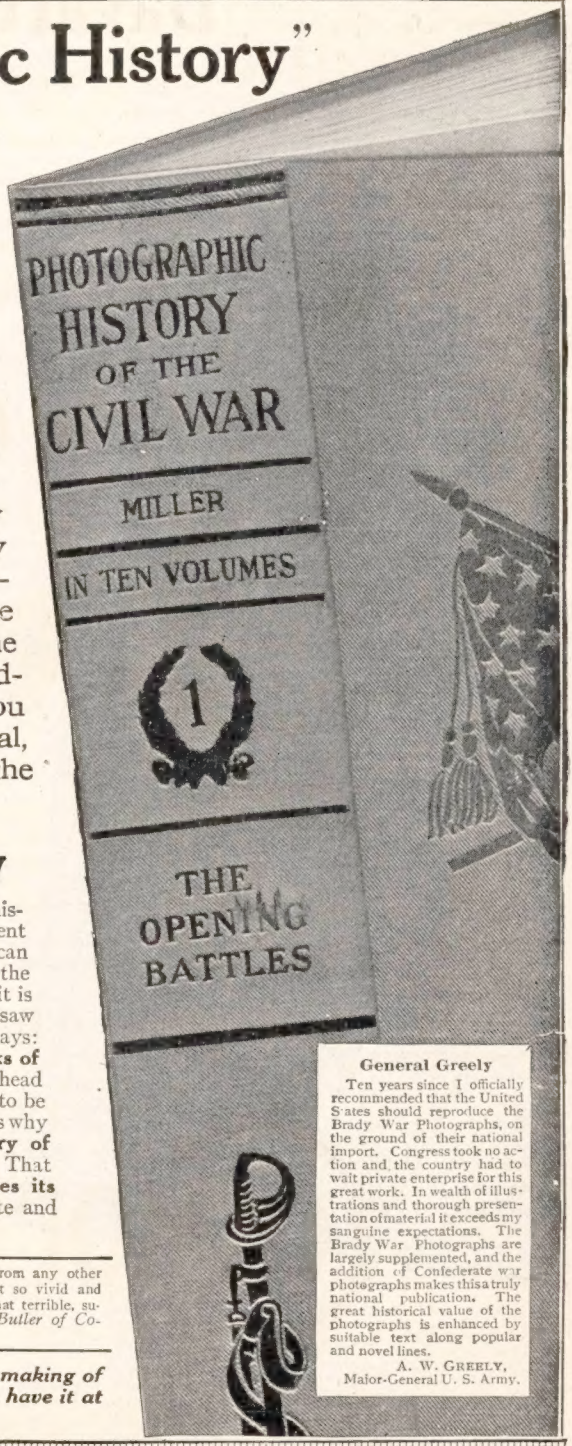

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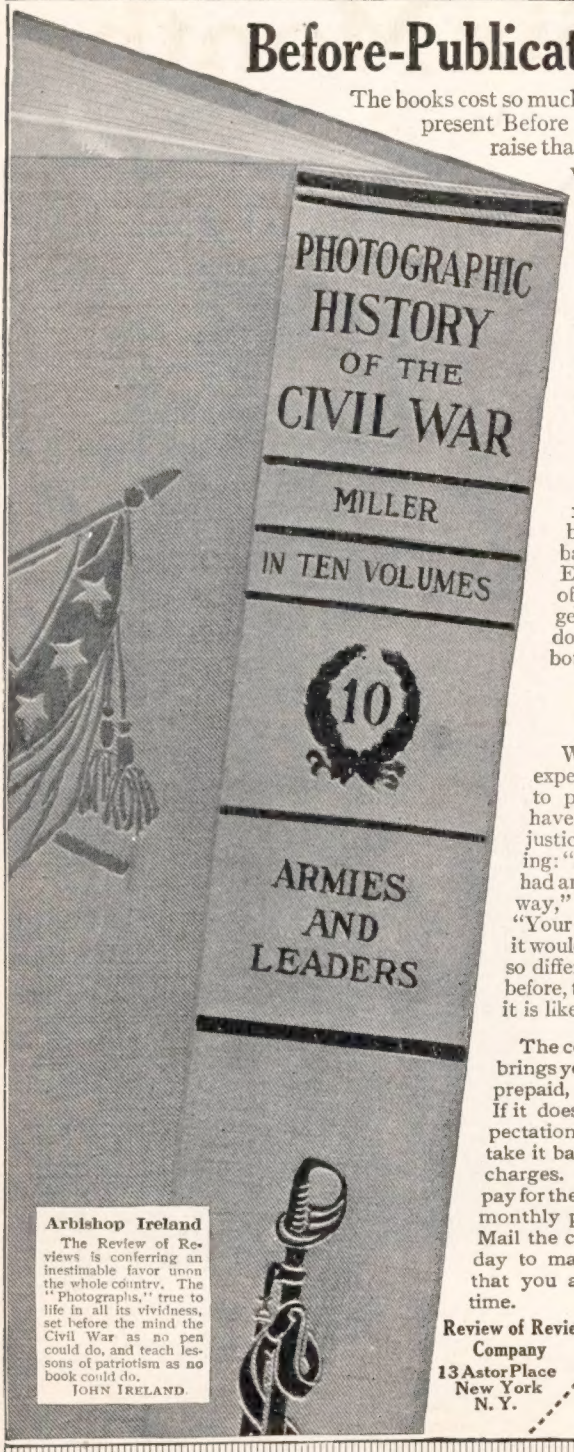

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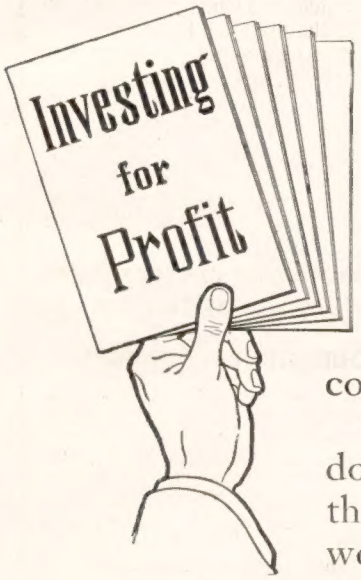

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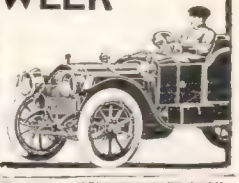

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VOLUME XXI NUMBER 6

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

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Pop. Mag. 10-1-11

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXI. OCTOBER 1, 1911. No. 6

The Mystery of the Second Shot

By Rufus Gillmore

Mr. Gillmore declares that the modern newspaper flourishes on crime and has a greedy humor for suspicion. *Apropos*, he tells this story of how suspicion and rumor pile up, following the shooting of Bertrand Newhall, organizer of the Wool Trust. According to the inspector: "It's suicide all right. Newhall was up against it. It was the only way out." But the pertinent question still remains: "Could Newhall have shot himself without having powder marks upon his clothes!" This is Mr. Gillmore's first appearance in the POPULAR. We think you will welcome him. He has a big story to tell and he tells it dramatically and forcefully.

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

A THIN-FACED young stenographer, her head threatening to capsize under an overhang of sunset-colored hair, was the first to suspect. She typed the same sentence over and over—and listened. In the official refrigeratorlike stillness of the Massachusetts bank commissioner's department, words carried, and the teasing excitement soon took on a meaning. Finally, about half-past ten on that Wednesday morning, after a last whispered conference with his chief, Deputy Commissioner Haswell bolted out of the department. The stenographer allowed him time to reach the elevator; then she followed him out into the statehouse corridor, and called aside a reporter, who had bribed her with baseball passes.

Within ten minutes, the manager of the statehouse news service began to telephone the city editor of each Boston daily the significant news:

"It looks as though something were about to happen at last to the good old Province Trust Company. That's all I know. Get busy."

Eight Boston reporters—among them John Ashley, of the *Eagle*—started on a foot race to State Street. But Deputy Commissioner Haswell had taken a taxi. They arrived to find the bank closed, policemen driving a gaping crowd off the curb; and, stationed at the side door, a surly sergeant who denied them entrance.

The reporters promptly pooled their interests. The suspension of this venerable trust company marked the first check to the career of a conspicuous citizen. Each man knew it to be his business to locate Bertrand Newhall, president of the Province Trust Company, and to note carefully how he bore up.

According to the sergeant at the door, President Newhall was not inside. By adroit teamwork, the reporters worried him into calling out one of the clerks, who confirmed his statement. The skeptical reporters still hung about the two doors, convinced that they had President Newhall cornered. In the meantime one of their number had departed, intent upon a simple method of solving the problem.

Across the street, through a window bearing a "To Let" sign, with an opera glass glued to his eyes, Ashley, of the *Eagle*, watched every movement in the Province Trust Company. From this unoccupied office in an upper story, he had a slanting view into the trust company, over the heads of the crowd in the street, and unobstructed by the opaque screens in the bank's front windows. He scrutinized everybody in the grilled-in inclosure, as well as in the president's room, and finally became satisfied that Newhall was not there.

Ashley returned the borrowed opera glass to the optician on the ground floor. He was about to cross the street to acquaint the other reporters with his discovery, when the vehement talk of a little Italian bootblack caught his attention. The bootblack stood by his stand at the head of the alley opposite the trust company. He was holding forth to a little knot of listeners, talking with the gesture and passion peculiar to the modern Latin. The reporter instinct diverted Ashley toward him. Soon his casual curiosity changed to a lively interest. He had come upon information which lent an impetus and an entirely new bearing to the pursuit of President Newhall.

At half-past seven that morning, when the bootblack arrived to open his stand, he had found a black limousine stationed before it. As the clocks began to strike eight, the chauffeur jumped out and cranked up the engine. Shortly afterward, President Newhall came out of the clerks' entrance of the Province Trust Company. He was smoking a cigar, and showed no evidence of flurry. He carried nothing which would indicate that he was leaving for any time or distance. He crossed the street, and entered the waiting car. The chauffeur swung away from the curb, and the black limousine, with its single passenger, disappeared up State Street.

Ashley's cross-examination failed to shake the little Italian's assurance on two points of importance. He was certain that the chauffeur had cranked up before President Newhall came out, and he was positive that the chauffeur had started off without directions from Newhall. Apparently, that departure had been carefully planned in advance.

CHAPTER II.

Overhauling the past of a "prominent citizen" is frequently very like turning over flat stones in a moist meadow. Under the smooth exterior, one should prepare to come upon the slime of hidden motives, and all manner of loathsome things scurrying from the light of day.

When Bertrand Newhall, by organizing the Wool Trust, played the part of a pirate in modern business, conservative Boston sneered. When, a few years later, he was caught red-handed in the act of seizing control of the historic Province Trust Company, conservative Boston stopped sneering, and began to fight. But Bertrand Newhall was one, not only reckless of all Boston business traditions, but also one whose hand was never discerned at its work until the issue was certain. When they sought to snatch from him the presidency of the Province Trust Company, he deftly checkmated every move. When, defeated, they fell to predicting the speedy downfall of this fine old institution, he merely smiled. He could afford to smile. The contest had served to demonstrate to all Boston that this bank was as utterly his as if he could have buttoned it up in the inside pocket of his steel-gray waistcoat.

It is an important principle of successful business men to accept opposition serenely, to waste no time seeking revenge. Bertrand Newhall was an exception. In his malevolent pursuit of

an enemy there was never any let-up; it revealed a fixity of purpose and a sly cunning, amounting to mania.

Bertrand Newhall started the Wool Trust to destroy a competitor in the wool business who had dared to obstruct one of his still earlier schemes. His Wool Trust—an enterprise cunning and ruthless as Newhall himself—engaged to transfer the wool of producers direct to consumers on a coöperative basis. Its success would have wiped out one of the city's foremost trades. Boston wool dealers aligned themselves against it. They closed in and compelled the banks to call their loans to Newhall. But just as they thought that they had him, he suddenly loomed up in control of the Province Trust Company. With a resentment which was characteristic, he set himself to punish the banks which had withdrawn their assistance.

Soon after he had won his trust-company fight, his first enemy in the wool trade—an old man named Thorpe—stole away to his unoccupied summer home and killed himself. Those acquainted with Bertrand Newhall's relentless processes knew him to be responsible for the ruin, if not the actual death, of this old man. But what he had done, he had done legitimately, according to the rules of that form of civilized warfare called "business." No Boston newspaper cared to flirt with libel by laying the crime at his door. In fact, most of them were too deeply involved in making a popular idol of Bertrand Newhall.

Moreover, at this juncture, he allowed information to seep out that he had just estimated his life to be worth half a million dollars, by insuring it for that impressive amount. The Boston newspapers featured this news instead.

The long fight against the wool trade had reduced the Wool Trust to an anæmic and tottering condition. After Bertrand Newhall assumed charge of his bank, the Wool Trust took on a more healthy outward aspect. President Newhall's enemies—and they were many by this time—insinuated that this improvement was due to a secret process of blood transfusion from the Province Trust Company. They declared that Newhall had already dissipated his own private means, and that he was now engaged—illegally—in transferring the resources of the trust company to his earlier enterprise. But they could offer no proof, and city editors came to regard the insinuations of these men whom Newhall had outgeneraled, as nothing but rancor and spite. Bertrand Newhall they credited with being too shrewd a man to violate the State banking laws.

But the modern newspaper flourishes on crime, and has a greedy humor for suspicion. Ashley's discovery of President Newhall's sudden and carefully maneuvered exit threaded together all these old rumors. All that afternoon, a steadily increasing number of reporters ransacked the city in a vain hunt for the missing man.

Ashley returned to the *Eagle* at about four that afternoon, to learn that the police had joined in the chase, and that Newhall was now wanted for misapplication of the funds of the closed bank. With this news came that quick leap of the spirits known only to the reporter who has nosed out "a big story." But his elation was doomed.

Now that the police had confirmed Ashley's suspicions, Henderson, the star reporter of the *Eagle*, had taken over the assignment. To Henderson, the worst thing about life was that others should succeed. Ashley had incurred his enmity a few months before by furnishing the clew which enabled the State police to clear up the famous "Extension Bag Mystery." Henderson had not liked being beaten by a man on his own paper. He "had it in" for Ashley; and all his fellow reporters knew it.

Ashley found himself cut off midway in his report. Henderson turned his back, and began coolly to send other reporters over the very ground which he had covered. Retiring to his desk, Ashley was compelled to witness man after man hurry out on the hunt, and to feel the eyes of the others upon him, watching how he took his medicine. To add to the insult, Henderson on his way

out was stopping casually to make remarks which meant much—and nothing. Ashley jumped up and intercepted him.

"See here, Henderson," he said calmly, "just where do I fit?"

"Fit?" mocked Henderson, his tone bringing the attention upon them of every man in the room. "Fit!" he repeated. "Why, you don't fit at all. You're an accident, a left-over, a tin can on the dump, so far as this case is concerned." He started to brush by.

Ashley took him by the arm. "I started this," he protested, "and don't you think for a minute that you're going to lose me in the shuffle."

Henderson jerked his arm free. "You mix in on this, and I'll put it all over you," he threatened. "All over you—so your best friend won't know you for the mess."

Ashley laughed sardonically. Henderson was a soft, spongy man, whom he could have thrown like a pillow. His fingers itched—but he laughed.

His laugh bored in. Henderson's cheeks turned the color of spilled claret. "If you want to learn who's boss here, just start something—that's all I've got to say to you—just start something." Without waiting for an answer, Henderson whirled about and left the office.

Shortly after eleven on that humid June night, Ashley bent his course once again in the direction of Newhall's city residence. For almost twelve consecutive hours he had hunted for the missing man, without obtaining a clew. Four times before that day, he had returned to this deserted house, only to pound vainly upon its boarded-up doors. His first vigorous will for the chase flagged, but the habit persisted, keeping him at it with a dull, senseless obstinacy, like the second wind of a runner.

Not a person was in sight as he turned into Commonwealth Avenue. The rows of deserted houses flung back at him in a persistent tattoo the echo of his own footsteps.

Suddenly the door of one of the houses in the dead block was thrown violently open. A young woman rushed out. She glanced wildly up and down the avenue, saw Ashley, and ran down the stone steps. Almost before his mind began to register, she had reached and seized him by the arm.

"Come—come quick!" she gasped. She did not look at him, but toward the house. She did not heed his questions, but only tugged madly at his sleeve. A moment he held back; then he allowed her to drag him along the sidewalk, up the steps, into the house.

A few seconds later, Ashley was bending over the body of a man. It lay dull and without show of life upon a landing of the inside staircase to which the girl had dragged him. He turned it over and brought the face to view. Then he shot upright. Even in the dim light, coming from a distant room in the hall above, he recognized the strong features of Bertrand Newhall.

CHAPTER III.

In his amazement at his discovery, Ashley had utterly forgotten the young woman. Still gazing dumbly at the dead face, he was interrupted by her voice behind him.

"My—my father," she wailed.

Ashley's eyes turned instinctively toward her. The body lay upon the upper landing of the front staircase. She stood a few steps below him, leaning against the banister. One hand clutched the rail with a tenacity which left it white as her colorless face. The other held fast to the neck of a large green bag. He noted this bag—it was the kind lawyers carry—with surprise, realizing that it must have been in her possession all the time.

"Oh, father—father!" she moaned. "He—he has killed himself! Oh, I tried——" Her voice broke. After a time, she controlled it. "I tried so hard to reach him in time. Is—is he——" she stopped again helplessly.

Ashley bent over and raised one of Newhall's arms. There was no perceptible pulse; the hand lay stiff and inert in his. He placed the back of his bare wrist close to the man's lips; no breath fanned it. He turned back to-

ward the girl, and solemnly nodded his head.

By a quick leap, he managed to catch her as her hand loosened from the rail. He supported her until her body ceased to tremble, and her hysterical sobbing quieted. Then she drew away from him.

"What—what am I to do?" she begged.

Ashley led her gently down the stairs, and turned on a light. "I am sorry, but I'm afraid you can't leave yet. The police may want to ask some questions." He stopped before a chair in the lower hall. "Perhaps you had better sit down here and rest while I telephone for them."

"The police?" she seemed startled.

"They will have to be notified. Perhaps I could telephone for some of your friends first."

"There is no one but——" She stopped and bit her under lip. "There is no one I could send for at this hour. I have been abroad for a year, and have been home only a few days—I can't think of any one."

She sat down. For an instant she seemed oblivious of everything. But he had hardly reached the telephone in the back of the hall before she called: "Tell them that my father has committed suicide."

At the time, this request made little impression on the reporter, but he observed with some surprise the eager tone in which it was uttered.

After an irritating clash with a stupid telephone operator, Ashley secured and notified police headquarters. He was on the point of telephoning to his own paper, when it occurred to him that it would be wiser to take advantage of the time before the police came to make a fuller investigation. As he hurried back along the hall, Miss Newhall sprang to his feet.

"You aren't going to leave me?" she protested tremulously.

"Only to put things back as they were, before the police come," he explained.

"Oh!" She sank back in the chair. "I won't mind—if you don't leave the house. I'm not afraid," she declared, in a voice which shook so that it belied her statement, "only—only I need some one near to tell me what to do when the police come."

He reassured her, and hastened up the stairs.

The body lay upon the upper landing, where the stairway turned at a right angle toward the upper hallway, four steps above. The wound was on the left side, near the heart. He turned on the light in the upper hall, and returned to make a more thorough examination. Near the right hand lay an automatic pistol. One shot had been fired from it. After a long search, he found the shell, lying upon one of the lower stairs. He groped about the rest of the stairs and landing without coming upon anything else. Apparently, it was a simple case of suicide.

He turned the body back on its left side, as he had found it. As he did so, a dark object which it had covered came to sight. He picked it up. It was a chauffeur's cap. The name of the maker had been torn from it, but the size tag—seven and three-eighths—remained. With an ejaculation of surprise, he turned the body over again. There were no powder marks upon the clothes.

Puzzled, Ashley again examined the cap. Newhall was a man whom he had often observed motoring about downtown, but never wearing such a cheap cap as this. Whose cap, then, could it be? Replacing the body in its first position, he stepped gingerly over it, up the stairs, and into the hall above. A hasty examination showed him nothing of interest there.

He passed on to a room opening directly opposite the top of the staircase. The door stood wide open. He peered into it. It was a narrow room, hardly larger than a closet, lighted by a single incandescent lamp; it contained nothing but a sewing machine, two sewing tables, and a few chairs. Manifestly, it was a sewing room. No one was there. He was about to search it for evidence of recent occupancy, when suddenly he

stopped, and bent an attentive ear toward the staircase.

The sound of a woman's voice—lowered for secrecy—came up to him. "Please, oh, *please* get me Back Bay 43210," it pleaded. Now that he gave it attention, he realized that he had heard, subconsciously, these same sounds several times before. He dropped his search, switched off the hall light, and hastened quietly downstairs. But his footsteps on the bare hall below had no sooner warned her of his approach, than she hastily hung up the receiver. She turned toward him, her face flushed.

"I was trying to get a friend of mine, but she was not at home," she explained, returning to her seat.

The slight emphasis on the "she" made an unpleasant impression upon Ashley.

"I came down to call up a number myself," he said, in excuse. "Are you quite through?"

Her assent obliged him to call up the *Eagle*. It was time that he notified his paper of his discovery. But the receiver was hardly adjusted to his ear, when he was stopped.

"Sorry, madam, Back Bay 43210 doesn't answer," the telephone operator informed him.

He gave no evidence of what he had learned, asked for his own number. But he was not to get the news to his paper so easily. He was interrupted by a patrol wagon rolling up to the door. A squad of police scrambled out and entered the house.

At their head and front came Sergeant Smith, big and surly from much ordering about of men. He carried a lantern, which he held up rudely before the girl's face. "Who are you?" he demanded brusquely.

"I am Miss Newhall," she replied, pulling back. "It is my father—upstairs."

"Oh!" Sergeant Smith was surprised, if not softened. "Well, you sit down here," he ordered. "We'll take charge of things here."

At that moment his swinging lantern disclosed Ashley at the telephone.

"What are you doing there?" he yelled. "Who are you, anyway?"

"Ashley, of——"

"Hang up that telephone, and see that you keep away from it," he interrupted. Then he turned to his men.

"Bill," he roared, "you take the door, and see that no one comes in or goes out without my orders. Come on now, the rest of you, get a move on! Light up and search the house."

CHAPTER IV.

Before the arrival of the medical examiner, summoned from his bed, and of the inspector, dispatched from police headquarters, Sergeant Smith and his detail had authority only to search the premises for other people and evidence. What they lacked in power, they proceeded to make up in noise, thumping about the house, opening and shutting doors, poking into corners and closets and under furniture.

While his men ransacked the premises, Sergeant Smith, after a hasty survey of the body, mounted guard over Miss Newhall and Ashley. The law prescribes that every one shall be considered innocent until proved guilty, but Sergeant Smith reversed the prescription. He believed that the esteem of his superiors was to be earned only by laying early hands upon somebody who could be made to look guilty. Police practice would excuse his overstepping the bounds of decency, but never his failure to suspect where suspicion could be made to stick. Miss Newhall and Ashley he viewed with suspicion merely because he found them in this strange situation. If he could surprise or bully one of them into making a damaging admission, so much the better for him with the coming inspector.

Ashley, after a question or two, he gave over as too experienced to be trapped into any slip of the tongue.

He listened to Miss Newhall's story with an intimidating silence. When she finished, he began that hectoring which brings on panic.

"You say you reached Boston at nine o'clock, and that you didn't enter the

house until after eleven—what were you doing in those two hours?" he demanded.

"I was trying to find my father at the bank and at some of his clubs," Miss Newhall answered, her eyes flashing at the insult of his manner.

"What clubs?" he snapped.

She named four.

"So you weren't in your father's confidence; he couldn't trust you, couldn't he?" prodded Sergeant Smith, continuing, before she could answer: "Do you mean to tell me you didn't know where he was to-night?"

The girl drew back. "I knew he was in Boston," she admitted nervously.

Sergeant Smith had been waiting for just such sign of weakness. "You knew he was in Boston, and you knew he intended to commit suicide, without moving a finger to prevent him until nine o'clock?" he yelled, in a voice calculated to break the windows.

"I—I didn't know—I——" the girl's voice trembled, broke.

Ashley, unable to endure the spectacle longer, stepped forward. "You don't need to answer any more of that man's questions," he whispered. She drew back, put Ashley between her and the bullying sergeant.

"What do you mean by buttin' in? Any more of this and you'll sleep in a cell," roared Sergeant Smith, taking a threatening step toward the reporter. "Come back here, I'm not through with you," he called after the girl.

"You don't need to obey that order," Ashley advised her, without turning.

Sergeant Smith's poison-ivy complexion caught fire. He swept nearer and bulked threateningly over Ashley. Only the reporter's unconcern kept the overtowering officer from laying violent hands upon him. In fact, the reporter's preternatural indifference acted not only as a check, but as a shock. Sergeant Smith was the first to give way.

"What's your full name?" he demanded, retreating instinctively to the secure ground of police routine.

"John Ashley."

"Business?" snapped the sergeant, while he took breath and bearings.

"Reporter."

No modern police officer willingly makes an enemy of a reporter. They have too forbidding a fear of the press and its power to influence public opinion. Sergeant Smith's embarrassment was one from which he scrambled as best he could, snatching up those remnants of his dignity which he thought he might successfully bear off.

"That's all very well, young fellow," he went on, in a more man-to-man tone, "but you know what's coming to a man—reporter or any one else—who interferes with the police in the performance of their duty, don't you?"

Ashley smiled. "I surely do," he replied.

"Then keep out."

"I want to. Suppose you give me a chance."

The shaft rankled. Sergeant Smith's face grew crimson again. The failure of his peace offering enraged him. He doubled one of his huge fists as if to strike. But at this moment a commotion at the outside door distracted his attention.

"Where are you, sergeant?" some one, entering, asked in a crisp voice.

Inspector Swett had arrived from police headquarters. With an ominous shake of his head toward Ashley, Sergeant Smith moved away to make his report to his superior. But a still further indignity was in store for him. The inspector wagged his head in obvious indifference to the sergeant's perfunctory details.

In the midst of his report, the inspector's eyes, wandering, happened to light upon Ashley. He had not forgotten the important aid which this reporter had furnished in solving the famous "Extension Bag Mystery." Inspector Swett abandoned the sergeant, still talking, to greet Ashley.

"Hello, Ashley!" he cried cordially. "How'd you get in?"

"Beat you to it," answered Ashley, accepting the inspector's proffered hand. "In fact, you owe it to me that you're here now."

"You don't say? Tell us all about it." Inspector Sweet's tone, though

compounded of good nature, was tinctured with sarcasm.

Ashley laughed. Contact with Inspector Swett had taught him not to trust the inspector's apparent affability. He knew him to be one of the most obstinate and pig-headed theorists of the department, one who thought to make up with determination that which he lacked in intelligence. At the beginning of a mystery, Swett first formed a theory. This he resolutely held fast to, no matter how much it might be shaken by facts developing later. At the end of every case, Inspector Swett could always be found with his original theory in mouth, clinging to it like a bulldog to a stick. His salvation lay in the fact that sometimes he was right.

Instead of taking the inspector's question seriously, Ashley retorted: "What do you call it, inspector?"

"It's suicide, all right, I guess. Newhall was up against it. It was the only way out."

A smothered sigh of relief came to Ashley's ears from behind. He checked a natural impulse to turn and trace it to Miss Newhall. Instead, his glance flew to the inspector and sergeant, again conferring in the front hall. Apparently, neither of them had heard it. When he turned carelessly a few moments later, he found Miss Newhall reseated in the hall chair, watching alertly the conference in the front hall. As Inspector Swett, led by the scowling sergeant, started upstairs, she bent toward Ashley.

"Do you think I could go now?" she asked eagerly.

Ashley stopped the inspector to ask. She seemed disappointed at his refusal, but made no protest. Ashley would have liked to learn why she fled from the telephone at his approach, and, above all, why she was so relieved to have Inspector Swett declare it suicide. But these were matters better investigated later, after the police had gone. He followed the inspector upstairs, interested to watch the police investigation and to hear their dictum.

Inspector Swett, Sergeant Smith, and two policemen were gathered about the body. Sergeant Smith and the two policemen were on the steps above, Inspector Swett on those below. As Ashley drew near, he saw the sergeant bend across and whisper something to the inspector.

"That's all right. It's a simple suicide. Let him come," the inspector responded.

But Sergeant Smith was evidently nourishing his grudge against the reporter. With a shake of his head, he rose and stalked off along the upper hallway.

Inspector Swett got up at almost the same instant, thus failing to notice his assistant's defection. "Nothing to it but suicide," he announced, with an air of finality.

The two policemen nodded their heads.

"I never knew Newhall to wear a cap like that," suggested Ashley.

"My dear boy"—the inspector turned and placed a hand patronizingly on Ashley's shoulder—"this man knew we were after him. That was his disguise."

"Nine suicides out of ten occur in bedrooms or bathrooms," continued Ashley. "Why should this man shoot himself when part way up the stairs?"

"Thought of that," rejoined the inspector imperturbably. "Now, just you think for a minute. This man was alone in a house closed for the summer. No one would be likely to enter it except the watchman, and watchmen have too many houses on their beats to do more than stick their noses in any one. His body might have lain undiscovered for weeks in one of the rooms upstairs. Newhall was wise enough to choose a spot where it would be found, and found soon, son."

Ashley had to confess himself answered. And yet Miss Newhall's anxiety to have her father's death declared suicide kept his doubt astir. Moreover, could Newhall have shot himself without having powder marks upon his clothes? He was on the point of putting this question to Inspector Swett when he was stopped by the arrival of the medical examiner.

Doctor Sorley, grown gray in a

numbing occupation, seemed concerned chiefly in getting back to his bed. Kneeling upon the steps, he made a hasty survey of the position of the body. Then he turned it over, and examined the wound.

"Bull's-eye! Right through the heart," he declared, wiping his hands. He picked up the pistol, removed the ammunition holder, and counted the cartridges.

"Colt automatic," he muttered. "Thirty-two caliber—let's see, full charge is eight shots—six cartridges left in magazine—one in chamber—and one in body, make full eight. Found the shell?"

Inspector Swett pointed it out to him upon the stairs. The medical examiner picked it up and compared it with the cartridges in the magazine. "It's a thirty-two, all right," he announced. "Anything to indicate this isn't a clear case of suicide?"

"Not a thing, doctor," replied Inspector Swett promptly.

From his place on the lower landing, to which he had retired at the advent of the medical examiner, Ashley had suddenly become conscious of the intrusion of another face. At the medical examiner's question, Miss Newhall had risen from her seat in the hall below. Over the stair rail, he saw her face—mouth open, eyes starting—waiting breathlessly for the inspector's reply. As it came, he saw her draw a deep breath, and sit down, as one relieved of a great suspense.

As her face disappeared below the rail, Ashley happened to glance up. Over the rail on the floor above, Sergeant Smith was looking down. As he caught Ashley's eyes upon him, he jerked in his head. But Ashley noted a look on his face which showed that he, too, had seen.

CHAPTER V.

As Ashley left the house to telephone the news to his paper, he came upon Henderson on the steps, trying to wheedle admission from the officer at the door. The look of panic on Henderson's face, together with his own joy at having beaten him, caused Ashley to overlook their recent clash. Drawing Henderson aside, Ashley hastily recounted all that had occurred, including the strange actions of Newhall's daughter.

"Get me in," begged Henderson, with sudden eagerness.

"Can't. I'm in bad with the police myself," responded Ashley. He explained by telling of his quarrel with Sergeant Smith.

Henderson appeared to drop the idea at once. "You'd better get a move on and telephone your story," he suggested. "Going to say anything about your suspicions?"

"Nothing to hang them to yet," confessed Ashley.

"Take my advice and hold them back," advised Henderson; "you say the police call it suicide; better keep quiet about what you've seen, and get the start of them. You haven't got a leg to stand on yet—there may be nothing to it, anyway."

The advice was good, but Ashley was perplexed that a reporter of Henderson's "yellow" stripe should advocate it. Later on he was to understand it perfectly.

Hastening back from the pay station in the corner hotel, he found his reentrance to the house barred by the officer at the door.

"Inspector Swett agreed to let me come back," expostulated Ashley.

"Sure, but some one slipped by in your place."

The policeman, grinning, condescended to explain. As soon as Ashley had gone from sight, Henderson had sent in for Sergeant Smith. "After a session down on the sidewalk, the sergeant lets him in, and says for me to bar you."

Henderson had stolen a march on him, probably by making the most of his quarrel with the sergeant. In his dismay, Ashley recognized the futility of appealing to that disgruntled official.

"Send in word that Mr. Ashley wants to see Inspector Swett for a minute," he requested.

"Gone," replied the grinning officer.

As a last resort, he asked for the unfriendly sergeant.

"No use. He gave me orders not to bother about you. It ain't no use hangin' round; you've been double-crossed, and by your friend."

Ashley spent fifteen minutes in getting Inspector Swett on the wire at police headquarters. This amused official finally telephoned Sergeant Smith to admit him to the house.

Miss Newhall sprang to meet him, greeted him like a friend of long standing. "That man says I can go now. Oh, I was so afraid you weren't coming back!" she exclaimed. From the frightened way in which she drew near and kept close to him, he inferred that she had undergone further badgering during his absence.

"He has called a taxi for me. It ought to be here in a few minutes now ——" The upward inflection with which she closed, the expectant look in her eyes, indicated that she depended upon him as an escort.

Ashley had returned with the intention of making a thorough search of the house. To be carried off now meant that he must leave the field clear for Henderson. And yet, perhaps he could not do better than accompany the girl. Why had the others dropped their surveillance of her? On his entrance, Sergeant Smith had gone straight upstairs. Had he or Henderson discovered some clew which rendered the girl of minor import?

"Could you wait just a minute?" he begged.

He tiptoed hastily up the stairs. As his eyes gained the floor above, he stopped. Sergeant Smith was not in sight, but Henderson was on his knees, groping about the floor. A slight hiss attracted his attention. Sergeant Smith stood in the door of the sewing room, holding a green cloth bag, such as Miss Newhall had carried. Henderson jumped to his feet. As he did so, Ashley got the impression that he either dropped or stepped on something. At least, Ashley noted that, despite his haste, Henderson stooped to pick up something which he looked at, and then pocketed. It made little impression on Ashley then. His attention was centered on the green bag which Sergeant Smith was holding up. Leaning eagerly forward, he watched the two men loosen the string about its neck. Henderson's hand was thrust inside. He was on the point of drawing something from it, when Ashley's eavesdropping was abruptly terminated by a voice from the lower hall.

"The taxi has come," Miss Newhall called up to him.

The two men looked and saw him. Sergeant Smith left the bag hanging in Henderson's hands, and crossed the hall.

"Going to take the lady home?" he demanded. There was that in his manner which suggested that if Ashley were unwilling, he intended to volunteer himself. Ashley hesitated. What was inside that green cloth bag? Miss Newhall would probably know. Neither Henderson nor the sergeant would willingly allow him to learn, if he remained. No, he would follow its owner, and leave the bag to them.

To his dismay, Sergeant Smith followed him down, and accompanied them through the sidewalk throng to the waiting taxi. Were they to have his company all the way?

Shouldering back the rallying crowd of reporters, Sergeant Smith stood with one foot on the taxi step, one hand upon the door.

"Where do you want to go?" he asked.

Whether the sergeant went along or not, it would be a mistake to have that swarm of reporters on their heels. Before Miss Newhall could reply, Ashley bent over and drew the curtain on her side of the cab: "Say Parker House. We must dodge these people," he whispered.

She did as directed. The sergeant snapped the door shut, went forward, and spoke to the chauffeur. Soon they were flying away down Commonwealth Avenue. Ashley glanced at the seat beside the chauffeur. It was unoccupied. He rose and looked through the win-

dow in the rear of the cab. Sergeant Smith was not on behind. Then, as he turned to sit down, he came in for a further surprise. Lying in Miss Newhall's lap, grasped tightly in both her ungloved hands, lay a green cloth bag.

CHAPTER VI.

"Why, I thought the police had taken that," Ashley exclaimed, pointing at the bag.

She tightened her hold on it, turned, and looked at him with surprise. "N-o-o," she replied, after a moment's hesitation, "it has never left my hands."

Then there were two of these green cloth bags. "You were fortunate," Ashley pursued. "If the police had noticed it, they would probably have either taken it or examined it."

"That officer made me show him everything in it while you were gone," she answered, "but he said I could take it home with me."

If either of the green cloth bags contained anything of significance, it was evidently not this one.

"Did you know that another bag like that was found in the sewing room upstairs?" he asked.

"No, but father had several," she answered, with an apathy which showed neither surprise nor interest.

As though desirous of avoiding further conversation on the subject, she lifted the bag from her lap and placed it out of sight between the farther side of the cab and herself. Ashley noted, however, that she still kept one hand tightly clasped upon it.

They had reached Arlington Street, and the chauffeur had turned toward Beacon Hill. "Where shall I tell him to take you now?" he asked.

"Oh, I had forgotten," she started nervously, "to twenty-four Beacon Street, please."

Ashley leaned out the window and notified the chauffeur. They were already in the neighborhood. In a few moments the taxi drew up to the curb before an old-fashioned brick and brownstone residence. He jumped out and helped the girl down, and stood waiting for her to say good night. Instead, without a word, she ran quickly by him, and up the stone steps. Astonished, he stood looking after her.

"Good night, Miss Newhall," he called after her.

"Oh!" She took her hand from the bell, came running back down the steps to him. She was plainly much agitated, more nervous, it seemed to Ashley, than at almost any moment since he had met her. She stood before him, her hands fluttering, and her lips trembling. "I don't want to—I can't stay here," she stammered. "I thought—would you wait? Only a minute?" Without pausing for a reply, she pressed Ashley into the cab, and closed the door. "I won't be long—I——" she did not delay to finish, but ran back up the steps, and rang the bell.

Ashley looked at his watch. It was nearly one o'clock. An early-morning Boston stillness hung, heavy as a coma, over the streets and houses. The muted rumble of the taxi engine beat like a drum against the investing silence. Whom could she be rousing from sleep at this hour? A chaperon? Then why this sudden nervousness, and why this secrecy? Why had she pushed him back into the cab, and closed the door?

Involuntarily, he changed his seat, and watched the girl at the top of the steps ringing the bell again and again. After a long time the door was opened. Miss Newhall bent eagerly forward, and asked a question. Her voice was lowered; though Ashley listened earnestly, he could not make out a word.

But the sleepy maid who had answered the ring felt no such need for caution. "He hasn't been here this night," Ashley heard her declare clearly.

So it was a man she was seeking! Ashley started, bent forward almost out of the cab window.

"Where is he? Where can I find him? I must see him at once—tonight," he heard Miss Newhall say, in a voice almost hoarse with emotion. In her agitation she pressed forward, put one hand upon the knob.

The maid drew back, alarmed, closed the door a little. "I—I don't know,

ma'am," she stammered, "we—we haven't seen him ourselves since morning."

Never had Ashley seen a human being more completely transformed than the girl he handed back into the taxi. She had left him tremulous with excitement; she returned depressed, dazed. She fell into the farther corner of the seat, apparently unconscious of his existence. Twice he had to ask her where she wanted to go. And the bag, which hitherto had never left her hand, dropped unheeded to the floor.

He picked it up, and placed it on the seat between them. For the first time he had a chance to study her. She was a little older than he had thought—in the early twenties, probably—small and dark and piquant. She had the petulant prettiness of a kitten which insists upon attention, and purs when it is given. Her brown eyes were so big that they made her face seem small. "Spellbinders," thought Ashley, "and probably nothing to speak of behind them." And yet, she seemed to be suffering from some deep feeling just at present. Was it only because the man she had expected to find was absent?

She stirred, caught the conjecture in his eyes, and sat up. There was something quick and uneasy in her action. She studied Ashley furtively for a moment before she spoke.

"It was my father's attorney. I wanted to ask him some questions," she said, as one who had read his thoughts.

Ashley made no comment, did not look at her.

"He wasn't there," she went on. "It was very silly of me—to take it so seriously—only——"

Her laugh was out of place after the events of the evening; it was forced, unpleasant, led away too obviously from something hidden. All sorts of suspicions floated into Ashley's mind. Why should she care what he thought?

"Perhaps I could find him for you—afterward—if you would give me his name?" he suggested, without looking at her.

"No, I don't want him now. I shall see him to-morrow—soon enough—— Aren't we nearly there?" she veered from the subject. Then, without waiting for an answer, she nervously changed it once more. "My bag!" she cried.

"Did it contain anything valuable?" asked Ashley casually.

"All my jewelry."

"You must be more careful of it." Ashley put it in her hand. "Was there anything valuable in the one at the house? If there was it ought not to be left there."

"I don't know. No, I think not," she responded indifferently.

"If you will give me your keys, I'll be glad to go and make sure," he pursued.

"You are very good," she said, "but father wouldn't leave anything of value in an empty house."

"I should be very glad of an excuse to get back in the house," Ashley pressed. "You see, I had to leave it sooner than I intended, to bring you there."

"Oh—you are a reporter—I had forgotten——" She considered. "Come to me to-morrow, and I will let you have the keys, if you still want them. You have been so kind—that is the least I can do."

His interest in the bag she carried ceased when he saw her give it up to the clerk at the Lorraine for deposit in the hotel safe. And the bag at the house, he was convinced from her manner, could have contained nothing of importance. Assuredly, he had done well to follow her, instead of lingering on at the Newhall house. She had given him much to think about, and one or two clews that he was eager to run down.

The hotel elevator had hardly taken her from sight, than he flew to the Lorraine library. Nervously, he ran through the pages of the "Boston Blue Book" until he came upon the following entry:

Beacon Street, 24: Mrs. Jonathan Thorpe, Wednesdays. Mr. Walter Thorpe. Miss Alice Thorpe.

"Thorpe! Thorpe!" muttered Ashley.

The name rang a bell in his mind. What had he heard about a man named Thorpe? After a vain attempt to remember, Ashley rushed out into the hotel foyer. The city directory informed him that Walter Thorpe was a member of the firm of Thorpe & Adams, wool commission dealers.

"Wool dealers?" he questioned. "Then he must be one of Newhall's enemies. What could she want of him to-night?"

While he still strove to decide, he recalled his other clew. Was it possible that both clews connected, led to the same person? He leaped eagerly to the telephone book. Walter Thorpe's home telephone number was Back Bay 43210. This was the number Miss Newhall had secretly attempted to get while he was absent upstairs.

CHAPTER VII.

Early next morning, behind the locked door of a West End shooting gallery, Ashley conducted an experiment. With the aid of the sleepy proprietor, he stretched a white sheet across the rear. Against this, from varying distances, he fired shot after shot from a Colt thirty-two automatic. Powder marks showed on the sheet six out of seven times at a distance of thirty inches, and every time at a distance of twenty-eight inches.

He had already calculated Newhall's extreme reach to be from twenty-nine to thirty inches. He had made up his mind that he could not have shot himself from a distance greater than twenty-four or twenty-five inches. The absence of powder marks on his clothes hence bore out his suspicion that Bertrand Newhall had not killed himself.

Much which Ashley had planned to do that day was foiled by the necessity of receiving the congratulations of his fellow reporters. It takes time to decline courteously fifteen or twenty requests to "have a drink." It takes not only time, but thought and attention, to respond properly to the gibes of a crowd of reporters congratulating a fellow workman after their own peculiar fashion.

Ames, the stringy, sour-faced city editor of the *Eagle*, expressed the general attitude when Ashley went in to report. "Excuse me for not rising," he said, with mock humility. "I suppose now you'll expect Henderson and me to work under you."

Sarcasm such as this, Ashley took at current value, but the conduct of one man puzzled him. Henderson had changed his attitude toward him. Henderson was unexpectedly conciliating—apologetic. "You backed me in a corner, had me screaming for help, all right," he acknowledged, a smile lolling on his fat face. Later on, he drew Ashley aside. "I've quit on this assignment," he informed him, "it's yours from now on, if you see anything in it and want it."

"Guess there's nothing to it, if you've thrown it up," answered Ashley sarcastically.

"That's what. I don't see anything to it but a simple case of suicide. The story's all in as far as I can make out. But I thought from what you said last night——"

"By the way, what did you find in that bag?" interrupted Ashley.

"The queerest collection of junk you ever heard of. A lot of old daguerreotypes, a tin case full of keys, and a collection of old jewelry that might have belonged to a child. Looked as though some one had gone through a trunk and picked out a lot of old stuff to give away, except that the jewelry was packed in cotton wool and boxes."

"Nothing of value?"

"Not except as keepsakes. We thought we had landed something, but ——" a wave of his hand disposed of it as trash. "By the way," Henderson went on easily, "I didn't want to butt in, so I didn't say anything to Ames about your suspicions. Go in, tip him off, and get time to run them down, if you think it's worth while."

Ashley did not know what to make of this. Henderson had not asked him a question about Miss Newhall, where he had taken her, what she had said and

done. In fact, he was turning to leave carelessly, as though thoroughly convinced that Ashley had come upon a mare's nest.

"What convinces you that Newhall shot himself?" Ashley held him.

"Everything. Why, man, think!" Henderson's manner became for the first time a little querulous. "He was run down—a rat in a corner, without a friend to turn to—it was some God-forsaken country in South America or jail for his. What would a man like Newhall do, caught in such a mess? Pass it all up, wouldn't he? That's the answer! Now, I know he had a lot of enemies who wouldn't have liked anything better than to shoot him as full of holes as a sieve. But he *did* die inside his own house, and there wasn't a lock, door, or window tampered with. I know that because I examined every one. Now, if any one else shot Newhall, Newhall must have let him in with his own keys—can you see Newhall doing that? That is, unless"—Henderson grinned—"unless you or his own stepdaughter did the foul deed; you were the only two inside that house before the police arrived."

"Stepdaughter?" queried Ashley.

"Miss Newhall wasn't his own daughter, but he was so fond of her that he had her change her name. You don't really suspect that little doll of doing it?"

"No motive—in sight," admitted Ashley.

"And you'd have one beautiful hunt to find one," said Henderson, walking away.

And along early in the afternoon came information calculated still more to discourage Ashley's suspicions. Medical Examiner Sorley had held his inquest, and found for suicide. In view of the facts, the finding appeared to be thoroughly justified. The police testified that no one had entered the house except with keys; and the watchman and all others possessing keys established conclusive alibis. The secretary of the Wool Trust confessed that it had been on the edge of bankruptcy for weeks, owing to lack of capital; and Deputy Commissioner Haswell provided a good and sufficient motive for suicide when he testified that the Province Trust Company was hopelessly involved in the downfall of this other Newhall enterprise.

Against the weight of all this testimony, the absence of powder marks received slight consideration, was set down to the probability that Newhall must have used an underloaded cartridge. The chauffeur's cap found with the body was passed by without comment.

But the incredible thing about life is that the young and obstinate should dare to be as young and obstinate as we once were. Ashley refused to accept the verdict, asked to be assigned for further work on the case.

"It's just like a raw young thing like you to want to keep on with a story after it's off the hooks, decently interred and dead as a divorced wife," Ames, the city editor, sneered. "I've always found that when a suckling escapes the booze, worse things get to his block! But go on!—go on!—we're just running the *Eagle* to educate our promising young men. Go ahead—rattle the bones—and turn in a Sunday story if you're just bursting with suppressed words."

"Not much time for that—can I have help?" demanded Ashley, with appreciation.

Ames grinned. "You can have Conley—if he deigns to be with us to-day," he said.

Conley was a veteran reporter. That alone explains. Men are veteran reporters for just two reasons—incapacity and capacity. Conley had capacity. Enough beer could not be brewed in one day to cause him any serious harm. But, periodically, he forgot, and drank hard liquor. And then he became about as reliable as a chauffeur on a joy ride. Nevertheless, Conley, sober, was an excellent reporter; Ashley accepted him gladly as an assistant.

After pledging him to drink nothing except beer, Ashley sent Conley to get a view of the pistol and the chauffeur's cap, to trail them back, if possible, to

the men who had sold them. If he had time, he was also to interview some of the directors of the Province Trust Company, and pick up any information he could regarding Newhall's movements for the past few days. These points covered, Ashley set out himself to follow the main track to Miss Newhall. After giving his own testimony at the inquest that morning, he had looked for her, only to learn that she had testified early, and departed. He found now that she had also given up her rooms at the Lorraine. The clerk could not tell him where she had gone. Ashley moved away as though he had just heard of a death in the family.

The summer home of the Newhalls was at Mossett, twenty-five miles away. He had hoped to see Miss Newhall, get the keys, make a thorough inspection of the house where Newhall had died, and also pay a visit to the Thorpes—all, during that afternoon—and the hotel clock pointed at six minutes of three.

Ten minutes later Ashley was sprinting across the South Station. By nearly knocking the guard at the gate off his feet, he managed to swing, puffing and spent, upon the steps of the last car of the three-four train for Mossett.

CHAPTER VIII.

About forty people alighted from the train with Ashley when it arrived at Mossett, at a little after four. He watched them tumble, laden with bundles, into the waiting carriages, automobiles, and busses. Not one did he recognize, but he knew them to be small Boston business men who sought this distant, sleepy little shore town to secure a refuge from the summer heat for their wives and children. By the time he had learned that the Newhall house was over a mile from the station, and that he could best reach it by one of the station busses, this conveyance had filled. He climbed up on the seat beside the driver.

For momentum, the bus depended upon an old, spavined horse, who was induced to believe things were better ahead because a young, red-haired boy plied the butt end of a whip so vigorously behind.

"You don't know whether Miss Newhall came down this afternoon or not, do you?" asked Ashley, partly to call off the driver from his prey.

"Sure," answered the boy; "she came down on the three, and I took her over." He stopped drubbing the horse to take a look at Ashley. "Be you a relative?" he asked.

"No; just a reporter."

He was rewarded by another and longer look from the boy. A reporter in Mossett evidently excited as much interest as an actor or a magician.

"Well, you ain't the only one," the boy went on, after a moment.

Ashley knew that Newhall's disappearance had sent a flock of reporters to this little town. He said nothing. He was planning what he should do when he reached Second Cliff, the abode of the Newhalls.

"Second Clift's got a new name now," the boy broke in, with a grin.

"That so?" responded Ashley, without interest.

"Use ter call it Newhall's Folly; now he's gone and shot hisself, we're callin' it Suicide Clift. 'Tain't the first suicide we've had on Second Clift, either. Old man Thorpe, who lived up next to Newhall, shot hisself there a little while ago. Guess it's contagerous, like scarlet fever."

"Thorpe!" mused Ashley, carefully dissimulating his attention. "Who was he—some relative of the Newhalls?"

"Relative!" The boy laughed. "Ain't you never heared of the trouble down here between Newhall and old man Thorpe?"

Ashley shook his head.

"Well, that's kinder strange—an' you a reporter! Thought everybody knowed 'bout that. Old man Thorpe, he come down first, an' put up a real clever house over on the clift. No one thought of buildin' there before—nothin' to see but the ocean, an' 'skeeters so thick they bit a dog to death. Then, he invites his friend, Newhall, to come down an' see what a fine place he's got. Newhall comes; somehow he gets

loony over the place, too, an' the first thing any one knew he'd bought up all the rest of the land on the clift. Then he went to work an' put up a house as big as a hotel, an' fixed up the whole darn place. His mansion made Thorpe's house look like a shack.

"When the old man kicked, Newhall just tole him he'd better get busy, an' buy a balloon or an airship—he wasn't goin' to have the old man passin' over his land any longer. You see, Newhall, he had been sharp enough to buy the only road up the clift. Thorpe, he couldn't get into or out of his land—not without wings. Thorpe claimed he had a right of way to the road, but he found it another matter gettin' it. Newhall put up a fence an' a trespassin' sign. Then they both went to law 'bout it.

"Now, I ain't sayin' this, but I heared it: they say that Newhall had the whole thing planned, egged the old man on, was just waitin' to get the old man into court an' bust him, so he could get hold of his little pinch of land, too. He skun the old man of his money, all right. Newhall was just gettin' ready to step in, was round askin' one of us to buy it in for him, when one day old man Thorpe sneaks down into the empty house and shoots hisself through the head. Everybody says Newhall druv him to it. An' now, Newhall, he ups an' does the same thing hisself! That's why we're thinkin' of callin' it Suicide Clift. Strange, ain't it, how a man can't do anybody dirt without gettin' a wipe in the face hisself?"

But Ashley was too keenly interested in facts to care for their philosophy. "What about the Thorpe house—did they have to give it up and leave here?" he inquired.

"Not on your life! The old man's widder an' son had to mortgage it; they had to yank young Thorpe out of college to keep their heads out of water, but they held onto the house. Guess the robins'll be wearin' trousers 'fore they give up *that* after what's happened."

"Why, what else happened?" demanded Ashley.

"Ain't that enough?" The glint in the boy's eyes suggested that there was more.

Ashley shook his head. "Go on," he said.

"Well, young Thorpe, he was girlin' with Newhall's daughter, an' they kept it up through 'bout all the trouble between the families. But that was broke off quick after the old man shot hisself."

Ashley seemed to be much more interested in the end of his cigarette than in his next question. "Are the Thorpes down here now?" he asked.

"I dunno. I thought I see young Thorpe down on the marsh this mornin', but the house ain't been open since the old man died, an' he didn't come on any of the trains, or I'd 'a' seen him."

"What was he doing on the marsh—fishing?"

"I dunno. Ain't sayin' 'twas him. All I know is, I was driving the barge over to the noon train, when I see somebody that looked like him sittin' down and lookin' into the creek over there where it forks. But he didn't have no fishin' pole, an' there ain't no fish there, anyway—'cept clams."

The bus had separated from the crowd of vehicles which had kept company with it along the main road from the station, had taken a road which led straight across the marsh. On the left was a wharf or two and a huddle of weather-worn buildings which must be Mossett; on the right, from road to horizon, stretched a waste of marshland intersected by a shallow stream. About a hundred yards from the road this creek forked, separating into two smaller streams. Ashley turned and looked toward the point on the marsh where the driver thought he had seen Thorpe. A man might have wandered out upon that barren, muddy waste to shoot small birds, but this was not the season for peep or yellow legs. What was he doing out there?

"You get out here, if you wanter go to the Newhalls," the driver broke in on his ruminations. "Take that road right up the clift. I've got to drive over to the beach with the rest of these people."

CHAPTER IX.

Ashley faced a carefully manicured macadam road, which began at the end of the long causeway over which he had come. Two great, square bowlders marked the entrance. Up a short but sharp rise, the road corkscrewed—in sight for only a few rods at a time. On either side, clusters of bushy sumach and elderberry, thick tangles of golden-rod, wild carrot, and other weeds scrambled to its very edge. An occasional birch, cypress, or wild cherry tree rose above the shoulder-high vegetation. It was a miniature, half-grown wilderness—utterly untouched—nothing except this ribbon of macadam that promised a house.

As he neared the brow of the hill, he came to a sudden halt. A turn brought him to a grass-grown road leading off to the right through the thick shrubbery. The two roads were kept apart by big posts and a heavily timbered gate. The gate stood open; a key hung in the large padlock. On each side of the gate were huge "No Trespassing" signs—each a taunt to the other.

Here, then, was where the Thorpe-Newhall feud had come to a climax. Here, over a trivial right of way, one man had pitted himself against the other; each had studied how he might most aggravate his neighbor. They had locked horns, fought on, each for his eggshell rights, until death, quicker than the courts, stepped in to pass judgment. And now—sole monument to a senseless strife—the gate stood wide open, the key in the padlock.

Following the main road to the left, Ashley found that beyond the next bend it ceased to ascend. Straight before him lay the rear of a great, spreading, colonial dwelling. Its huge chimneys and ostentatious bulk filled the eye with their dimensions. This must be the Newhall summer home. He perceived at once why the driver had referred to it scornfully as a hotel.

Clothes lay scattered on the grass to dry, but he saw no other evidences of occupancy. Passing by the side of the house, he came to its front, and, a few feet beyond, to the edge of the cliff. He stopped in amazement. Coming up the road, the encompassing shrubbery had given him a feeling of being deep in the green country. And here was the ocean—nothing but sea and sky, so far as the eye could see.

His first sensation was one of delight at the scope and grandeur of the view. But not a boat or sail relieved the monotony of that stretching waste of blue water. Gradually, it began to wear on him. He moved nearer the edge of the cliff, and looked down. Seventy feet below, the sea crept in over piles and masses of rocks. They were stained and hung with seaweed. These the sea had won from the land and made its own, placing upon them its dark and sinister mark. The effect was bleak—unpleasantly bleak. A step nearer, and, the sheer drop to the rocks below brought its inevitable impulse to throw himself over.

Drawing back, his eyes fell upon a footpath running along the edge of the cliff. At intervals, the cliff had crumbled away, the worn footpath led straight out over the edge. So this was the depressing site over which two men had fought so bitterly!

And then Ashley turned and understood. Back toward the west and south stretched the marshes. Their soft, placid green soothed the eyes. Beyond were little round hills, with roads running like narrow ribbons to their tops. They were dotted with homely, weather-beaten houses. Here and there, they snuggled together in neighborly comfort, and a church spire marked the village. And everywhere was the soft green of the grass and the darker green of the trees. Here the country came down to the sea. When the spectator tired of one, he had but to turn to the other.

A scrubwoman, coming out of the front door of the big house, with a broom and pail of water, interrupted Ashley's reflections. Without noting his presence, she set to work to wash the paint on the front steps. He approached her.

"Is Miss Newhall at home?" he asked.

"You can go in and see," she replied, without looking at him.

Surprised, he went up the steps. Probably, she was an extra woman hired for this work. One of the regular maids would meet him inside, and take his name to Miss Newhall.

Entering, he heard voices upstairs, but he wandered aimlessly about the hall, looking into the neighboring rooms, without coming upon any one. Finally, he came back and sat down in the front hall. Some one would appear sooner or later.

Having settled this point, he gave attention casually to the voices upstairs. The first words he distinguished caused him to bend forward and listen, all ears.

"I don't want it investigated," he heard Miss Newhall declare, in a petulant, trembling voice.

"Then you're left without a cent in the world," remonstrated a voice, which was unquestionably that of a man. It was incisive, threatening, as though its owner had exhausted his stock of argument and patience. After a pause, the man went on: "Your father leaves nothing whatever except this insurance. All his money and property are gone—even this house. Let it go as suicide, and you are without a cent or a roof over your head."

"I don't care. I've some money of my own," the girl replied stubbornly.

"I thought I told you—that's gone, too."

Silence. Ashley could feel, without seeing, the shock which this news gave Miss Newhall. The hall clock ticked away many seconds, before she could gather herself together. But when she finally spoke, her voice was even more resolute.

"Very well. I have my jewelry," she said. "I wish you wouldn't talk to me any more about it. I know that father must have intended to do—what he did."

"I have reasons for knowing that you are mistaken," the man answered coldly. "Your father told me plainly only the day before that he expected a certain enemy of his to shoot him. Not only that, but he told me the name of the man. On the day of his death, I know that he had a long conference with this man. He telephoned me that he was to meet him again last night. And the name of that man was——"

"Stop!" The girl's scream brought Ashley to his feet. "Don't you dare bring his name into this," Miss Newhall cried, in a voice which choked with anger. "I know—I *know* he had nothing to do with it. If you try to bring him in to this—if you dare to try, I don't know what I shall do. I——" Her voice wavered, broke, she began to sob.

Ashley heard a sound as if a man had risen. "Very well, it's for you to decide," the man pacified her. "Only remember that I came way down here to show you what you ought to do. I hope you won't complain to me, if, later on, you regret what you are doing."

Ashley heard the man make his way across the floor. Quickly he opened the front door, fled past the indifferent scrubwoman, and hurried back down the road.

CHAPTER X.

Beyond the first curve in the road, Ashley parted the shrubbery and kept sharp watch of the house. He must learn who Miss Newhall's visitor was. He would leave soon, and he would have to make his departure by this road. Ashley would at least get a glimpse of him.

The whir of a motor coming up the road caused him to hurry to cover. Probably this car had come to take away Miss Newhall's visitor. After it had passed, Ashley hurried down the road, and chose a hiding place among the undergrowth near the entrance to the road. He had hardly settled back in his retreat before he heard the chauffeur loosen his brake and throw in his speed clutch. The car whizzed by too quickly for Ashley to get more than a glimpse of its occupant through the tangled shrubbery. But, jumping out into the road, he managed to catch its number. He set it down. When he returned to Boston the "Automobile Register"

would tell him who the owner of that car was.

The scrubwoman was just disappearing through the front door when Ashley got back to the Newhall house. She was a gaunt, flat-chested female, with a surly manner.

"Back again, hey?" she scoffed. "I suppose now she'll be gettin' rid of me again, sendin' me out to wash the steps a third time this day."

"Mrs. Higgins!" called some one behind her sharply. Miss Newhall appeared. She had a chiffon scarf over her shoulders, as though she were prepared to go out. She stared at Ashley in obvious dismay.

"Oh!—how do you do," she cried. Then, after manifest hesitation: "Won't —won't you come in?" She remained standing in the hall. Ashley had an uncomfortable feeling that his arrival had been inopportune. Miss Newhall kept her eyes on Mrs. Higgins until she disappeared through a door at the rear of the hall, then she turned and looked at him, expectantly, without saying a word.

"I missed you in Boston," Ashley explained.

"Yes." Her manner was cold, inattentive, not calculated to put Ashley any more at ease.

"I hope you haven't forgotten your promise," he hurried on.

"My promise?" she asked listlessly.

"I came to ask you for the keys."

"I have changed my mind about that." She moved away, without inviting him to follow.

For an instant Ashley hesitated, then he followed her down the hall, into the library at the right.

At his entrance, she turned and faced him. There was the suggestion of a scowl on her face.

"Do you mind telling me *why* you changed your mind?" he persisted.

She made an impatient gesture with her hand and sat down. Immediately Ashley sat down also—waited.

She studied him with growing irritation, then she seemed to sense the uselessness of prolonging the contest. The scowl disappeared from her face. "Very well," she said, with sudden graciousness, "if you want them so much—I think I will get them for you." She left the room.

She came back and handed him the keys. "I hope you will pardon me for seeming so rude," she apologized, "but one of my maids left this morning, without warning. I'm very sorry that I could not conceal that I was so upset."

Ashley saw that she was reconciled, even conciliating, but he noted that she remained standing, evidently waiting for him to take leave.

"Am I detaining you?" he asked. "Perhaps I am keeping you from——"

"Oh, no—no—I've absolutely nothing to do."

"Then——"

She interrupted him with the air of one who has suddenly thought of something. "I wonder if you would do me a great favor?" she asked.

"Anything that I could, I am sure."

"Father's automobile has been found."

"Yes."

"It was abandoned near Westborough, and the police have telephoned me to send for it."

"Abandoned? Near Westborough!" ejaculated Ashley. "Why, where is the chauffeur?"

"No one seems to know—that is what bothers me. Would you be willing to go and get it for me?" she asked.

"Why—yes."

"If you could—and at once—it would be a great load off my mind."

Ashley wondered why she was so eager to get rid of him. Suddenly he observed the chiffon scarf on her shoulders, and the reason flashed upon him. He had intercepted her as she was going out. The bus driver had seen Thorpe in Mossett. She was going out to meet him. If he left and kept watch, perhaps she would lead him straight to Thorpe.

Securing an order from her for the automobile, he took leave, returning to his former point of espionage. In a few minutes his expectations were fulfilled; he saw Miss Newhall hastening along

the path that ran by the edge of the cliff.

CHAPTER XI.

Running fast, Ashley came upon the Thorpe cottage from the rear before Miss Newhall arrived at the front. Screened by a wild cherry tree, he studied the house. It was a small, Queen Anne cottage, shutters upon all the lower windows, the blinds closed upon all the upper.

"If Thorpe's in there, he's hiding like a criminal," he mused, after a careful examination of the tightly sealed exterior.

A voice trilling warned him of the approach of Miss Newhall. She was coming along the path at the edge of the cliff, waving her scarf expectantly toward the Thorpe cottage. Was Walter Thorpe inside—waiting for her signal? Ashley kept his eyes fastened upon the windows on that side of the house. Watching, he thought he saw one of the blinds shake a little, as though some one had started to open it. The girl trilled again. No, the blind remained closed, motionless. In another moment Ashley doubted whether it had really moved at all.

Miss Newhall stopped, studied the windows on that side a moment, then passed out of sight around the corner. In a few moments he heard her knock loudly upon the front door. He listened intently; after that, not a sound. Had she been admitted? Growing restive, he left his hiding place, and crept up close to the broad piazza at the front of the house. The opening above at his end would afford a view of its entire length. Crouching, he listened. Not hearing a sound, he rose after a minute, and looked over. One hasty glance and he drew back with alarm. Miss Newhall was at the front door, one ear against it, her eyes in his direction. He crouched lower, closer to the house, and held his breath, not daring yet to venture the noise of a retreat.

"I'd like to know how you dared to follow me."

Ashley glanced up to find Miss Newhall regarding him angrily from above. It was the last thing he wanted to happen, but now he had to brazen it out.

He rose. "Evidently you do not know that I was here first," he said calmly. "Do you think it strange," he went on, "that, seeing a girl coming along the cliff trilling and waving her scarf at a closed cottage, my curiosity should have been aroused?"

She regarded him keenly. "Do you know whose cottage this is?" she demanded.

"No—that is, I suppose it is the Thorpes'. They are the only other people on the cliff, aren't they?"

"But you promised to go to Boston at once to get our automobile," she said accusingly.

"There's no train for three-quarters of an hour. Was it anything very strange for me to wander up here, to be interested in this deserted house?"

It was plausible. Moreover, it was what she wished to think. Her face relaxed, the flash faded from her eyes. "I came over to see if Mrs. Thorpe were here," she broke out, after a moment, avoiding his look. "I did not like to be alone after all that's happened. But she isn't—nobody seems to be here. I shall have to get some one else to stay with me. Wait a moment, and I will show you the way back along the edge of the cliff."

They walked a short distance in silence. Then—"You didn't see any sign of anybody, did you?" she asked him suspiciously.

Embarrassed, he hesitated. Should he lie, as she had? While he debated, there came the quick, sharp spat of a shot.

They both stopped. Involuntarily, Ashley turned toward Miss Newhall. Her big eyes glittered, widened swiftly with terror. For one moment she stared at him. Then she turned and ran back toward the Thorpe cottage.

CHAPTER XII.

Though Ashley ran at his utmost speed, Miss Newhall reached the cottage before him. When he leaped up the piazza steps, she was pounding hysterically upon the front door; tears

streamed down her face. "Walter, Walter, Walter!" she called, with a frenzy which made him fear for her reason.

Before he could make a move, she turned on him, her hands changed to claws, shaking. "Why don't you do something—why don't you do something?" she screamed.

A single glance showed him the futility of attempting an entrance through the shuttered doors and windows of the lower story. Tearing off his shoes and hose, he prepared to climb a post to the sloping roof of the piazza. In his ears was the din of her cries—"Walter, Walter, Walter!"—increasing his confusion, making his hands clumsy at their work. If she would only stop!

She came running down the steps as he started to climb the post. "Why don't you do something—why don't you do something?" she screamed, into his very ears. As he managed, at the risk of his neck, to clamber up on the steep roof, he heard her running round and round the house, screaming: "Walter, Walter, Walter!"

Pulling open the blinds on the nearest window, he tried to open it. It was locked. He smashed the glass, unlocked the window, and entered. Leaping across the room, he stumbled over a stool. Hurrying through the still darker hall, he ran into a chair. Turning blindly into the next chamber, he nearly tripped over——

It was the body of a young man. Blood was trickling down his cheek. By his side lay a pistol. Ashley knelt and made a quick examination of the wound. Then he ran downstairs, unlocked the back door, and called to Miss Newhall. He had intended to prepare her for what she would find, but she tore by him and rushed upstairs. When he came up, she had the young man's head in her lap. Regardless of the blood which flowed upon her hands and gown, she was kissing him, calling "Walter, Walter!" to him in a voice which set Ashley's nerves on edge.

Then it *was* Walter Thorpe. Ashley bent down and spoke to her. His words were as unheeded as though he had spoken to stone. He touched her shoulder. "You had better get up now," he suggested.

She pulled away.

He lost patience. "Get up, if you want to help him," he said sternly.

"He is dead—dead!" she moaned, without moving.

"Nonsense! The shot only grazed his head," he urged. "Get up! I need your help."

She sprang up at once. "What can I do? Oh, let me do something," she cried.

He realized that if he wished her to regain control of herself he must give her something to do. "Take my handkerchief—get some water," he ordered.

In a few seconds she came running back to him. "There is no water on—oh, what shall we do?"

"Then we must move him to your house—at once. Come, I need your help." Together they carried Thorpe away. Ashley allowed her to think she was really sharing the burden, though he permitted little of the weight to fall on her. By the time they reached the Newhall house, she was almost herself again.

Keeping her from calling the servants, he carried Thorpe upstairs, and deposited him on a couch in one of the bedrooms.

"I'll telephone now for a doctor," she said.

"No. I don't think I'd do that," he cautioned her.

"Why not?"

"Do you want people to know about this?"

"No."

"If you call a doctor he will have to report it to the authorities."

She hesitated; after a moment, she came droopingly back. "Oh, but I'm so worried! You are sure—you are *sure* it isn't anything dangerous?" she begged.

"Yes. I'll prove it to you now."

She got water, linen, and antiseptics. He allowed her to help him wash and dress the wound. It was on the left side of the head, near the temple. The bullet had hardly more than grazed the

skin. And yet, for so slight a wound, Thorpe had been insensible for an unusually long time. Ashley dashed a little cold water upon his face.

In a few moments, Thorpe stirred, and at last opened his eyes. They fell upon Miss Newhall, standing at the foot of the couch. His jaw dropped —perceptibly he shrank away from her.

Ashley turned toward her. "You must go," he whispered.

She shook her head.

"But——" Ashley turned just in time to prevent Thorpe from rising. It took all his strength to place him back on the couch, to pinion him there.

"You must go, or I shall not be able to keep him here," he threatened.

In a moment he heard the door close behind her. "I have sent her away. You shall not have to see her again," he promised the still struggling man.

Thorpe's muscles relaxed at once. His eyes fixed on Ashley. There was something strange in their look. It was the same look Ashley had noted in the eyes of certain imbeciles.

"Will you stay here and be still, if I keep her out?" Ashley asked, wondering.

A sort of half light came into Thorpe's eyes. His mouth opened as if about to speak. But his tongue mumbled, and he made nothing but inarticulate sounds. After a moment he half raised himself upon his hands. Ashley had a feeling that he was trying his utmost to say something. But it was in vain. Thorpe drew a deep breath, as one who suffers from a sharp pain; his face became intensely white; before Ashley could spring to him, he sank back, and, without a word, turned his face away to the wall.

CHAPTER XIII.

A few minutes later, Thorpe raised himself, and went through the same heartrending performance. Ashley, watching him with sympathy, was dismayed to see him fail again, and finally turn his poor, contorted face back to the wall. What was he trying to say? A confession?

Rousing himself from reflections which led nowhere, Ashley lifted him, removed his clothes, and placed him in the bed on the other side of the room. Thorpe's shoes and trousers were heavily crusted with mud and dust. The mud might have come from his wandering upon the marsh, but the dust had settled deep into the seams; it could have come only from a long walk over dusty country roads. Had Thorpe been in Boston the night before? Had he walked the twenty-five miles to Mossett?

Eagerly, Ashley examined Thorpe's pockets. He found nothing of interest except a bunch of keys. One by one, he compared them with the keys which Miss Newhall had given him. No key to the Boston home of the Newhalls was among them.

Ashley sat down beside him on the bed, and questioned him. But the attempt proved fruitless. Thorpe seemed to understand, appeared to do his utmost to answer, but the result, again, was only a few inarticulate and meaningless sounds. After a time, Thorpe stopped trying. He made signs that he was hungry. Ashley rose and opened the door into the hall, to secure food and drink for him.

With an exclamation of surprise, Miss Newhall moved away from the sill. She had been listening. Hiding his astonishment, Ashley told her what was needed.

A little later she came into the room, carrying a tray. Thorpe seemed to know by instinct the instant that she was there. He threw the clothes back, and started to jump out of bed. Calling to Miss Newhall to go, Ashley grappled with him, and managed, after a time, to calm him. Then he fed him the broth and bread. Thorpe ate as one famished, gestured for more, but when denied sank submissively back in bed. After one apprehensive glance toward the door, he fell asleep.

While he listened to his deep and regular breathing, Ashley realized with a start that he had utterly overlooked the pistol with which Thorpe had shot himself. He had left it at the Thorpe

cottage. His own shoes and hose were also there. This was his opportunity to secure them.

Again Miss Newhall started away from the door as he opened it. Annoyed, he determined to have it out with her. "I must go over to the cottage for my shoes," he began. "Mr. Thorpe is asleep. Have you a maid I can leave with him while I am gone?"

"I prefer to stay with him myself," replied Miss Newhall, with acrimony.

"In view of what has happened, that is impossible," Ashley answered coldly. "In fact, you must promise me not to enter the room, or I shall not go."

He was proof against her obstinacy and her entreaties; in the end, she agreed to follow his orders. She brought Mrs. Higgins, the surly scrubwoman, to stay with the patient.

After giving this woman orders to keep perfect silence, and to allow nobody to enter the room, Ashley departed.

The pistol with which Thorpe had shot himself proved to be an old-fashioned Colt thirty-two. The shot which had killed Newhall had been a thirty-two automatic.

Within ten minutes, Ashley had felt himself close to two things which would establish Thorpe's connection with the crime; within that space of time, both —first, the keys, and now the pistol— had failed to bear witness against him. Ashley secured his belongings, locked up the cottage, and returned keenly disappointed.

Miss Newhall was not in sight. He ran upstairs to Thorpe's room. Before he opened the door he heard sounds of trouble. Inside, Thorpe was struggling to get out of bed, and Mrs. Higgins was holding him there by main strength. Ashley had arrived just in time, for the woman was spent. Relieving her, he finally quieted the patient; then he turned sternly upon Mrs. Higgins.

"What have you been doing to him?" he demanded.

"Here, here, now, don't you be blamin' me," she answered tartly. "He was all right till Miss Newhall came buttin' in."

Ashley said nothing. He simply looked at her.

"Now, you can believe me or not," she went on hotly, "but just as soon as he happened to turn round and see her here, he made a streak for the door. It warn't no easy thing for the two of us to get him back, either, with him fighting us off, and his face working like as he was goin' to throw a fit. He never said a word, but he never began to let up till she left the room."

Ashley's eyes happened to turn to Thorpe. He was regarding them intently, listening. "Is this true?" Ashley asked him sharply.

Taken by surprise, the patient tried again to speak, but his face went through only the old contortions. Once again he gave up, turned away, as one who shields an infirmity from public view.

At least, he seemed to understand what was said. "I will see that she doesn't come in here again," Ashley announced loudly for his benefit. Making a sign to Mrs. Higgins to remain, he left the room.

Miss Newhall, coming up, met him at the head of the stairs.

"I must see you at once," she said, with asperity. She led the way downstairs into the library. There she faced him with the petulance of a spoiled child.

"You have been deceiving me, and I shan't stand it any longer," she declared angrily.

Not knowing to what she referred, Ashley remained silent.

"You told me Mr. Thorpe was not dangerously wounded," she burst out. "You tried to keep me from seeing him, but he is—he is—and the time has come for me to take things into my own hands." She started to leave the room.

"One minute, Miss Newhall," said Ashley coolly. "Perhaps you will tell me what you think is the matter with him."

"He cannot speak—just look at his poor, twisted face—something terrible

has happened—and you are keeping him up there, without proper medical attention, suffering the way he is! It's a shame—I don't see how any man could be so cruel—but it has gone as far as I shall let it. Now, I shall do something—do something myself!"

Ashley covered his resentment at her accusation and her manner. "What do you intend to do?" he asked quietly.

His calmness seemed to infuriate her further. "I intend to send for a doctor, have him looked after, send him to a hospital if necessary," she cried.

"And you know what will happen then?" he warned.

She made a gesture of contempt; again she started to leave.

"As soon as a doctor sees him," he went on, "he will ask how he came by his wound. You must tell him. He will have to report it to the authorities. As soon as the police hear of it, they will ask: 'Why should he have shot himself?' They will remember the bad blood between your two families."

"That is all over," interrupted Miss Newhall quickly.

"You can never convince the police of that. It is their business to suspect the worst."

Ashley saw that she was impressed, that she wavered, half convinced. "The moment you take that step," he continued, "you make him an object of suspicion. Don't send for a doctor—take my advice—send for the police instead—it will save time—it all amounts to the same thing."

His sarcasm succeeded where anger might have failed.

She regarded him silently, suspiciously, for a moment, then she dropped into a chair.

"I know what you fear," he went on, more soothingly. "I am going to Boston for a friend of mine who is a doctor; I want him because he won't talk. And I must see Thorpe's people, and tell them about it. If this isn't done, they may call in the police to find him, which would be quite as bad. There's just one question for you to decide, Miss Newhall: Do you want to do what's best for the man upstairs, or do you insist upon doing what's worst for him? We must keep everybody off the track as long as we can. Everything depends on that."

"I don't trust you—but have it your way," said Miss Newhall grudgingly.

CHAPTER XIV.

If Newhall had been shot by some other hand than his own—and Ashley was becoming every minute more firmly convinced of this—the trail led direct to Miss Newhall and Thorpe. Left to his own desires, Ashley would have secured his friend, Doctor North, and returned straight to Mossett. But common humanity urged him to delay long enough in Boston to break the news to the Thorpes in person.

During the few minutes that he waited for her in the library of her Beacon Street home, he conjectured what Miss Thorpe would be like. She would be faded, gentle, and forty, after the accepted type of Boston spinster. She would be crushed, dried, and dulled by the long string of misfortunes which had befallen the family.

Then she entered the room, and Ashley experienced the surprise which lies in wait for one who makes imaginary portraits. Alice Thorpe was young and blond—she was slender and graceful, her head seemed to tilt on her slim neck like a flower—and she had blue eyes.

Some time, in every man's life, the miracle happens. And the trouble with miracles is that they catch one unprepared.

Ashley was confused. "I have some news to tell you of your brother," he broke out. And he was clumsy about it.

All the color drew back from Alice Thorpe's face. She wavered. Ashley saw that his manner had been even more ominous than his words. He liked himself less, perhaps, than ever before. Then the girl rescued him.

With a reassuring smile she turned, closed the door, then faced him. "Yes," she said, still white, but with a com-

posure which eased the situation appreciably.

He felt better. He began again.

"Oh, you are a reporter." She stated it as a fact—without alarm. Her manner seemed to bridge over what was—when he interviewed the average woman—a dangerous pass in the conversation. Her quiet air of confidence kept up all through his recital—even though her face paled and her breath caught. Many women hold the bearer of bad news responsible for it. Miss Thorpe took no such illogical stand. She listened intently, silently, seldom interrupting.

"Walter is in no danger—you are sure?" she begged.

Ashley hesitated. Was it necessary to deceive such a woman? "No; the wound is a very slight one, only he seems to be unable to talk," he admitted. "That is my real reason for coming to Boston. I intend to take a doctor back with me."

Her blue eyes showed the alarm which she could not quite repress. "Oh, you needed a better doctor—than you could get at Mossett?" she inquired.

"No. I came up here for a friend of mine. I wanted one who would keep the news from getting out."

She came straight across the room, and offered him her hand. "That was wonderfully kind and thoughtful of you," she said. "I shall never be able to show you how grateful we are." Her eyes shone, her whole bearing was charged with a sudden friendliness.

The action was so frank and so impetuous that Ashley could not but feel more strongly drawn toward her. She may have had the ordinary woman's conception of a reporter, but she did not question his motive, took him on faith, trusted him utterly.

"I must go to Walter at once," she exclaimed suddenly. "It was so good of Miss Newhall and you to look out for him, but I think mother can spare me now. Could you wait a minute? I closed the door so mother shouldn't hear. She has been very ill, but this news will stop her from worrying, and she may ask to see you."

She left the room. Alone, still standing, Ashley struggled with a new perplexity. An acute revulsion of feeling seized him as he realized the anomalous position he occupied. Here he was accepting the friendly confidence of a girl whose brother he was tracking like a criminal. She had appealed to him; he felt an overmastering desire to help her; and yet, what would she think of him, if she knew his intentions?

As he considered the matter, some of his zest for the chase died down. After all, what foundation was there for his belief that Walter Thorpe had had anything to do with the killing of Newhall? He had as yet no actual proof. Only a few suspicious circumstances pointed that way. He alone knew of them. If he persisted in investigating these, he might call general attention to them, be himself the direct means of bringing more and greater suffering upon Alice Thorpe and her family. Surely they had experienced more than their full share already, with a father who had been driven to take his own life, a mother ill at home, an only son who had also attempted to commit suicide—and no one but this young girl to shoulder the family's troubles. Too late, he might learn that Walter Thorpe was innocent. Why should he take the risk, make it harder for Alice Thorpe? The question took the very pith from his purpose. He must give it up, if he wished to have any respect for himself at all.

It was on the edge of such a decision that Alice Thorpe returned, and led him to her mother. "She wants to be assured that Walter is in no danger, and to thank you herself for all you have done for us," she declared.

The sight of Mrs. Thorpe only reenforced Ashley's decision. Propped up in bed to receive him, her wasted face showed paler than the pillows, and her eyes, sheathed in great, shadowy sockets, fastened on him, pathetic, questioning. She released a thin, feeble hand from the clothes, and extended it to him along the coverlet.

"My son—my son is in no danger?" she pleaded.

"No, madam, you may be sure of that." Ashley took her hand and pressed it gently.

"Thank God! Oh, thank God!" she murmured weakly. Her face worked; Ashley had a feeling that she was about to break into tears. He looked away. He could not bear it.

"I want him to come to me—just as soon as he can," she went on plaintively. "We need him—Alice and I."

Ashley bowed his head—maintained a respectful silence.

"We have worried so all yesterday, last night, and to-day—not knowing where he was—and the news of Mr. Newhall's death was such a shock—Walter had an engagement with him last night—so much has happened—we were so afraid he might be dragged into it."

Ashley's heart lost a beat. Thorpe to meet Newhall on the very night of the latter's death!

"We looked for so much from that meeting," the invalid went on. "It seemed as if all the old trouble between the families was to be patched up at last—but last night, when Walter did not come home, we began to worry, and——"

Ashley's mind was in a panic. Should he stop her? Every word was indicting her own son.

"We worried about Walter, not about Mr. Newhall," she continued, more feebly. "Walter gave me his promise not to have any trouble with him—but Mr. Newhall was a dangerous man—we feared it might be a trap—I don't know why Walter should have shot himself—I——"

Alice Thorpe noticed Ashley's discomfort. Deftly she quieted her mother, and made it easy for him to take leave.

A few minutes later she joined Ashley in the library. It was he who this time closed the door. A frown was on his face, and a deep furrow between his eyes, as he turned toward her.

"Miss Thorpe," he began, "your mother must tell no one else about that meeting last night."

She looked at him with surprise. "You believe that my brother had something to do with Mr. Newhall's death?" she asked, after a moment.

"No."

"Thank you. Then why?"

"Other people might."

"I am sorry, but it's too late."

Ashley stared at her in dismay. "Who knows about it?" he managed to ask.

"A man came here this morning who insisted upon seeing mother. He seemed to have information which he wouldn't give to any one else. I thought it might be news about Walter, so I took him up to her."

"And your mother told him what she told me?"

"Yes."

"Who was he?" demanded Ashley quickly.

"I don't remember his name. It didn't occur to me that his visit was important. Oh, wait a minute, his card must be here in the wastebasket."

She found the card, and when Ashley read the name upon it he gazed at her in utter dismay. Henderson had been there before him!

CHAPTER XV.

Henderson on the trail! Then, for the sake of the Thorpes, he, too, must keep at it. As he walked slowly down Beacon Hill, Ashley tried to determine why Henderson should have made his way so quickly to the Thorpes'. At last it came to him.

"Sergeant Smith called that taxi for Miss Newhall last night," he reflected; "all he had to do was to pump the chauffeur to learn that we went straight to the Thorpe house."

But was Henderson following this trail alone, or was he working in combination with Sergeant Smith? Ashley recalled that the sergeant had shown Henderson the green bag discovered in the sewing room. This indicated that they might be working together. But how much of what Henderson had learned from Mrs. Thorpe had he shared with Sergeant Smith? If the police were on this trail, also, Thorpe

might be arrested at any moment on suspicion.

Ashley's step quickened at the realization of this possibility. Hurrying into the Parker House, he called up Doctor North. The doctor had been a roommate of Ashley's at college; he agreed to hasten through his calls, and meet Ashley in the South Station about nine that evening.

With nearly an hour and a half on his hands, Ashley emerged from the telephone booth with the discovery that he was hungry. He had not eaten anything since half-past five that morning. Calling up Conley, he learned that this worthy had discovered some things not to be told over the wire.

Ashley had just ordered his coffee in the big, deserted dining room of the Parker House, when Conley came in and quietly slipped into the opposite seat. For a moment neither of the two men spoke. But Conley's silence was portentous.

"Well, what have *you* got on your chest?" Ashley demanded, after a fitting interval.

"Enough to give a boarding-house refrigerator a fine fit of indigestion," responded Conley.

Conley leisurely lighted a cigarette. Then he began:

"When I left you, I beat it to the medical examiner's, for a squint at the pistol and cap. That gun's sure a new one, but Newhall never bought it in Boston. I rustled every gun store here without finding one which had handled that number. But the cap was as easy as a Dutch picnic. It was the cheapest kind of a cloth cap, with a pasteboard visor, and a seven and three-eighths at that. Now, a cheap cap like that ain't sold much except on Eliot Street, and there ain't many chauffeurs with a seven and three-eighths' head. I got next to the man that sold it in the second store I entered."

"Who bought it?" asked Ashley eagerly.

"Something queer comes in there. It was bought by a short, thick man of about thirty, with a wart on his right temple, and it was bought a little after eight on the morning of the day that Newhall passed out. The clerk remembered his man because he started away without trying it on. 'Here, that won't fit you,' the clerk yelled after him. 'That's all right,' said the man with the wart, making a quick get-away."

"Short—thick—thirty—wart on right temple," repeated Ashley, his face growing dark. "Why, that's the other end from any description of Newhall!"

"Sure. That lets Newhall out. The man who bought it had on cheap, dark clothes and a chauffeur's cap."

Ashley reflected. "Tanned face?" he asked, after a moment.

"Yes."

"Ah! Then it was probably a chauffeur! Conley, it's up to us to get a description of Newhall's chauffeur and see how it tallies."

"Newhall paid off his chauffeur the day before his death, and said he was going to fire him."

Ashley bent across the table. "Any trouble between them?" he asked quickly.

"No. The same chauffeur took the machine out of the garage the next morning."

"Then he abandoned it late last night in Westborough," exclaimed Ashley. "There's our man—there's the man I want to know all about," he cried, his manner becoming excited.

Conley checked him with a wave of his hand. "Fine," he declared scornfully; "fine, if I hadn't stumbled onto a better lead. I happened to remember this afternoon that Courtney Little was one of the directors of the Province Trust Company. You know Courtney—son of a rich man—shoved on the board to tickle the old man's vanity, and to give the trust company tone! Well, I caught Courtney this morning in his father's office, and he was so sore on Newhall that his tongue couldn't work fast enough.

"It seems that Newhall had got tired of Courtney, wanted to shelve him, and put another man on the board in his place, so Courtney spied on Newhall like a jealous wife, to learn who this other man was. Courtney says that

Newhall spent several mornings telephoning this man trying to arrange a meeting; Courtney says that he could tell from the talk that this man was one of Newhall's enemies. Well, he did finally succeed in arranging a meeting—and that meeting was to be held on the very night of Newhall's death!" Conley made his statement with the air of one who counts on surprise. But the surprise was his own. "You don't seem particularly feverish over it," he remarked, after a few moments.

Ashley considered him coolly. "That man was Walter Thorpe, wasn't it?" he asked.

"That's who!" Conley regarded him with astonishment.

"I want you to drop him, and follow up that chauffeur."

Conley was plainly nettled. "Who is this man Thorpe—is he a friend of yours?" he demanded.

"No—that is——" Ashley paused, embarrassed. "The fact is, Con, I'm after Thorpe myself, and want you to keep quiet about what you've learned. I want you to run down the chauffeur." He avoided further questions by turning over to Conley the order for the abandoned Newhall automobile, and telling him what to do with it.

As they were about to part on the sidewalk outside, Conley suddenly whipped round. "I thought Henderson had thrown up this case," he exclaimed.

"That's what he told me, but—— What do you know?" demanded Ashley.

"He went to luncheon with Sergeant Smith; one of the men spotted them."

Ashley's face darkened. "I haven't said anything about it, Con," he said, "but I guess we're likely to find Henderson lined up with the police against us on this case."

"Just what I suspished," rejoined Conley. "He bought me a drink this afternoon, and started in to pump me. When I sidestepped, he tried to josh me into thinking there was nothing in this, and that we were wasting our time."

"What did you say?" asked Ashley.

Conley grinned. "Me? I just let him think I was little Rollo, and believed all Uncle George said."

CHAPTER XVI.

Shortly after ten that night, Ashley and Doctor North descended from the train at Mossett. In the public conveyance to which they were directed, Ashley was surprised to find Alice Thorpe. He introduced Doctor North, and then climbed into the seat beside her.

It was a warm night, into which the cool of the evening was just beginning to come. A full moon lighted the way, piercing the open sides of the moving carryall, and dwelt like a spotlight upon its occupants. After greeting them, Miss Thorpe had sunk into a deep silence. Ashley stole a glance at her. In the luminous haze of the moonlight, he saw that she sat with her hands in her lap—drooping. Her eyes were heavy, and her cheeks were pale. She had been weeping.

His sympathy—silent as it was—seemed to reach her. She leaned a little toward him. "Doctor North will tell me the truth?" she pleaded.

"Yes. I will make sure that he does."

"You don't think that man Henderson can do Walter any harm—with what he knows?"

"No—when your brother tells us all that happened last night." He cautioned her not to allow the driver to overhear. She bent nearer, her voice sank almost to a whisper.

"He never could have done it," she murmured. "You believe me?" she asked breathlessly.

"Yes, I am sure of it." Ashley rejoiced that he could say it.

His tone seemed to reassure her. She leaned back in her seat, and they rode on for some time in silence. As they started up the cliff road, she bent toward him once again, her shoulder almost touching his.

"I will ask Walter to tell you everything at once," she whispered. "You will help me to take Walter away—it was very good of Miss Newhall to let him come there, but—but I am sure she will be relieved to have us go——"

Ashley realized that she dreaded meeting Miss Newhall. The two girls had not met in years, of course. He did his best to convince her that she would be welcome, but with only partial success.

She lingered behind as they went up the steps. Miss Newhall herself opened the door. For a fraction of a second the two women paused uncertainly, gazing into each other's eyes, then, simultaneously, they sprang into each other's arms. There were tears in their eyes, and the presence of the two men was absolutely forgotten. Leaving them together in the hall below, Ashley conducted Doctor North upstairs.

As they entered Thorpe's room, Mrs. Higgins jumped to her feet. But, as soon as she saw Ashley, she resumed her seat. Doctor North went at once to the bed, and busied himself with his patient. Ashley turned to Mrs. Higgins.

"Any more trouble?" he asked.

"I kep' her out," she responded significantly.

"Has he spoken?" he demanded eagerly.

Mrs. Higgins shook her head.

Ashley went over to the bed. Doctor North had removed the bandage, and was examining the wound.

"No sign of any fracture," he pronounced. "Yet there are some indications of coma. Has the patient been given any drugs?"

"Nothin' but water," broke in Mrs. Higgins, before Ashley could speak.

"There might be some concussion. There sometimes is with such wounds, but——" Doctor North gave his attention once again to the patient. "Turn over on your back!" he ordered sharply.

Thorpe obeyed.

Doctor North pressed back the pillow under Thorpe's head. "There—feeling better now?" he asked, in a coaxing tone.

Thorpe only stared at him stupidly.

Every effort to surprise the patient into speech failed just as lamentably. At last Doctor North abandoned the attempt. He reverted once more to the wound, became absorbed in a study of its location.

"Is the patient left-handed?" he inquired suddenly.

Ashley, unable to answer, departed to ask Miss Thorpe. He returned in a few moments. "No. He is right-handed," he reported.

Doctor North raised Thorpe's right hand to the light. Something he observed there caused him to wag his head.

"What is it?" exclaimed Ashley.

Without replying, Doctor North signed for Ashley to follow him out of the room. In the hall outside, he gave his opinion.

"My observation of the patient has been too brief to settle upon a diagnosis," he declared. "The symptoms might mean either one of two things. The patient may be suffering merely from the after effects of concussion, or he may be affected by a complete paralysis of his speech center."

Ashley moved uneasily. "What if it is merely concussion?" he asked.

"One good night's sleep may bring relief."

"But if it is the other?"

"If his speech center is affected, it is impossible to predict. People have been known not to recover their power of speech for weeks, and even months. I feel bound to tell you, Ashley," the doctor went on, "that there is every indication that this is what is the trouble. The patient appears to understand all that is said to him, but to be absolutely incapable of making any articulate reply. If it were merely concussion, there would ordinarily be a numbing of all the faculties. The fact that he can understand, but not speak, argues that his word center alone is affected."

Ashley managed at last to work out of the dejection into which Doctor North's statement plunged him. "What did you find in his hand?" he exclaimed.

"Nothing of importance," answered Doctor North. "Merely a cut upon the index finger of the patient's right hand, which showed why he had used his left instead. Let me explain: One thing

puzzled me for a time. This man shot himself with a pistol held in his left hand. In left-handed people, the active cells are all upon the right side of the brain, the cells upon the left side are in disuse. Hence his injury at first appeared to be upon the side opposite the affected area. Now, in right-handed people, the active brain cells are all upon the left side. Consequently, when you told me that the patient was right-handed, it indicated that the wound was upon the same side as his speech center. That may seem to indicate something to you; as a matter of fact, it indicates nothing, for the simple reason that there appears to be absolutely no fracture of the skull."

Ashley stared at the doctor with surprise. "Then the wound may have nothing whatever to do with his loss of speech," he cried.

"Precisely."

"Then how——" Ashley's bewilderment stopped him short.

"People sometimes lose their power of speech from shock."

"Shock! Then he might have been unable to speak before he received this wound?"

"Possibly. Of course, that's all supposition."

Ashley's eyes snapped as though he had made an important discovery.

CHAPTER XVII.

The sound of voices in the hall below prevented further discussion.

"You will stay here overnight?" Ashley requested quickly.

Doctor North nodded.

The two women were waiting for them at the foot of the stairs. Miss Newhall's eyes were red. There were traces of tears about Alice Thorpe's blue eyes.

"How is he?" the two girls asked, almost together.

With the physician's traditional caution when facing an unresolved complexity, Doctor North answered evasively: "He is doing very well; quite as well as could be expected."

"I want you to tell us if he is in the least danger," Alice Thorpe said, with her extraordinary composure.

Doctor North seemed to take her measure at once. "My dear young woman," he said, "the wound is not at all serious. The patient seems to be suffering somewhat from shock, but a good night's sleep ought to do much for that."

"Can he speak?" cried Miss Newhall.

Doctor North pretended not to hear.

"Can I see him?" demanded Alice Thorpe.

"Why, y-e-s, I think you may see him—if Mr. Ashley has no objection," responded Doctor North, shifting the responsibility. He avoided further questions by stating that he would like to go to bed, since he must rise early to see the patient, and get back to Boston. "There is absolutely no occasion for worry," he pronounced, as Miss Newhall led him away upstairs.

Ashley conducted Alice Thorpe to her brother's room, and waited outside. He had strong hopes that Thorpe might speak to his sister, but a sense of delicacy kept him from intruding.

She came back almost immediately. "He was sleeping," she whispered. "I didn't have the heart to wake him. Poor boy!" she murmured, as they walked down the stairs together. "We thought he was safe from any trouble of this sort, because he went his own way, regardless of what others did or had done. He was not like father; he took things as they came, and never thought of retaliation."

They had entered the library. Alice Thorpe turned and looked Ashley straight in the eyes.

"Please, please don't believe anything against him," she pleaded.

Her request was singularly earnest. It took Ashley by surprise, and—somehow—it hurt. Had Miss Newhall been prejudicing her against him?

"I don't—I assure you I don't—I've told you that," he stammered.

Her look partially reassured him, but before he had time to question her, Miss Newhall tore into the room. In a few minutes she had made the situation plain.

Miss Newhall passed by him without so much as a glance. She approached Alice Thorpe, evidently in a rage at having had to leave them together.

"How was he?" she demanded, with an excitement almost hysterical.

Alice Thorpe put her arms about her, and drew her down beside her on the couch. "My dear," she said, in a comforting tone, "Walter was asleep, and he needs sleep more than anything, so I didn't wake him. Everything will be all right in the morning, dear. Try not to worry any more. You have had too much already for one woman to stand."

"But they won't let me see him, and you will take him away so soon," complained Miss Newhall.

"No, I think it would be better to keep him here."

The two women looked at Ashley. Unconsciously, he had spoken with an air of authority. The dangers hemming in Walter Thorpe, his own suddenly enlarged interest in him, had made him forget everything else.

"There! What did I tell you?" Miss Newhall's cry was jealous, triumphant, as though his statement formed a proof of all she had said against him.

Too late, Ashley realized the depth of her resentment, the interpretation she would place on every word and act of his. Silently, he waited to determine what its result would be.

Alice Thorpe raised a protesting hand to the girl beside her; then she turned toward Ashley. "Do you mean that Walter is too ill to be moved?" she asked quietly.

"No, I wasn't thinking of that."

"Then why? Please tell me frankly."

There was no prejudice on Miss Thorpe's part. Ashley felt the relief of her firm faith in him. An overwhelming desire to vindicate himself swept over him, carried him away.

"I will. I will be quite frank," he replied. "You and I, all of us, know that what has happened to your brother is nothing that concerns the public. But it has come at a most unfortunate time. If the news should get out, the newspapers would connect it with other events——"

"You see! He suspects!"

Ashley turned upon Miss Newhall for the first time. "Not I," he said bitterly, "but the newspapers and the public. Can't you see what they would suspect the moment they learned that Walter Thorpe had attempted suicide? And what answer have we for them? None! At least, not until Mr. Thorpe can tell us what happened last night, and why he did what he did. That is why I think he ought to be kept here, the last place in the world where they would expect to find him."

"Yes—yes," mused Alice Thorpe. "I can see. The newspapers would connect this with the old trouble between the families. We should have the old scandal revived, aired——"

"Scandal! He means far worse than that," broke in Miss Newhall.

Alice Thorpe looked at her, startled, questioningly. "Worse! What do you mean?" she asked, after a moment.

Miss Newhall jumped to her feet. She pointed a finger at Ashley, which trembled with anger. "Tell her, tell her," she screamed. "Tell her what you told me—threaten her—threaten her with Walter's arrest." Her voice went higher, her manner became more hysterical, with each word. Her mouth quivered, her whole figure shook, she seemed on the very edge of nervous collapse.

The same fear came upon her two listeners at once. Alice Thorpe drew back to the couch again, spoke soothingly to her; and Ashley, leaving, heard: "He—he thinks Walter is—guilty." Then a very paroxysm of sobs.

Ashley mechanically ascended the stairs, and entered the room allotted him. Upon him was that uncertainty which is the torment of a strong-willed man. Where did he stand now?

His elbow against the frame, he gazed out the window, and considered the situation. He had enemies to face now within as well as without the house. Miss Newhall would impugn every motive, distort the purpose of

every act. And what must be its effect upon Alice Thorpe?

Suddenly, out on the silvery stretches of the marshes, a moving figure caught his attention. It was distant, but the bright moonlight made every action visible. He wondered idly what anybody could be doing out on the marsh at this hour? He looked at his watch. It was nearly midnight. Curious, he watched this man leap ditches and hurry through the thick grass. Whoever he was, he seemed to be in unusual haste, and to be making for one particular point. At last he reached the place where the stream running through the marsh forked. He knelt, shaded his eyes, and seemed to study the bed of the creek intently. Ashley stared. Why, that was the place where the bus driver had seen Walter Thorpe early that morning! Could it be Thorpe now?

Ashley rushed to Thorpe's room. No, he was still abed, asleep. He returned to his espionage. The man on the marsh had evidently seen what he was looking for. He removed his shoes and stockings, and waded out in the mud. Ashley saw him pick up something, wrap it carefully in his handkerchief, and then prepare to go.

Ashley made quick time down the cliff, and across the hither side of the marsh. He reached the bank of the creek just in time to see the man disappearing over the causeway toward the town. In the thick mud of the creek deep holes showed where he had come and gone. Ashley knelt down on the bank near where the tracks ended. Just beyond, he made out a slight depression in the mud. Here must have lain the object which this man had been at such trouble to secure. He leaned far over the bank to learn what it could have been. Then suddenly he whistled.

Stamped in the thick slime, roughly but clearly, appeared the unmistakable outline of a pistol.

CHAPTER XVIII.

In a tumbled bed, on pillows which burned, and with his mind working like an electric fan, Ashley started at this latest discovery and worked back. Either Henderson or the police had recovered that pistol. What had led them to look for it? Gradually, he came back to the house where Newhall's body had been found. Could they have come upon any clew there which led them to search for this pistol? Across Ashley's mind flashed certain pictures stored away: Sergeant Smith watching Miss Newhall over the banister; the same officer exulting in the discovery of the green cloth bag; Henderson delaying to pick up something from the floor before he showed any interest in this bag. For the first time, Ashley's mind jumped upon, seized an overlooked detail: *What had Henderson stopped to pick up?*

When, hollow-eyed from lack of sleep, Ashley came downstairs at six the next morning, he found everybody stirring except Miss Newhall. Alice Thorpe seemed to avoid him, though her greeting was friendly. His information respecting affairs in the house came from Doctor North, who took him up to his room.

"The lady of the house," began Doctor North, "has an attack of nerves. Also, she seems to have worked up a splendid case of antipathy to you, so I condemned her to her bed and room. This will keep her out of your way—that is, if she obeys my orders," he amended, with a smile.

Ashley thanked him. "Have you looked at Thorpe this morning?" he inquired eagerly.

Doctor North nodded.

"How did you find him?"

Doctor North shook his head. "No better. I am almost ready to diagnose his trouble as complete paralysis of his speech center."

The look of trouble in Ashley's face deepened. "We've got to make him talk—somehow," he urged. "That's our only salvation."

Doctor North regarded him gravely. "There'd be almost as much chance with a newly born child," he announced.

Ashley sank dejectedly into a chair. "Then your medicine has failed to work," he muttered.

"Those powders," declared Doctor North, "are merely a bluff. If I didn't prescribe something, the women would jump to the conclusion that I was either ignorant or neglecting the patient. Hence, a few absolutely harmless powders. In a case such as this, nature does about all the work. Thorpe is suffering from intercranial pressure or a brain clot produced by some old injury, or by shock. In time, this will relieve itself. In some few instances a second shock has been known to accelerate the flow of the blood, and accomplish a recovery more quickly. But you can't reckon on that."

"We must try one," exclaimed Ashley, jumping to his feet. "I must know to-day just what Thorpe went through the night before last. If I don't—well, I might as well throw the whole thing up. I have it," he cried. "Thorpe hasn't seen his sister; for some reason, he has shunned his family. There's the shock we are looking for!" he cried triumphantly.

But to the keen disappointment of both men, the expedient failed. Alice Thorpe lent herself readily to the experiment when it was explained to her. She came into the room at their signal. With a pathetic cry: "Oh, Walter, dear, what has happened?" she ran to her brother, and put her arms about him. A new light came into Thorpe's eyes as they fell on her face. His lips trembled. He tried hard to speak. While Alice Thorpe brokenly implored him to talk, the two men held their breath. But the moment passed, was followed by a long file of others, and nothing came of it.

Miss Thorpe's lips quivered as she watched her brother's pitiful mumblings. She drew aside, remained in one corner, fighting for self-control, while Doctor North applied the final test by handing Thorpe paper and pencil, and teling him to write what had happened. But when her brother, after staring vacantly at the pencil and paper, drew a few meaningless diagrams and then gave up, she ran weeping from the room.

His hopes here blighted, Ashley had recourse to the alternative hatched out during his sleepless night. Obviously, for the present, no information was to be derived from Thorpe. He decided consequently to explore again the premises where Newhall had met his death, before Miss Newhall should demand the return of the keys. He had little hope that Henderson would have left anything there for him to find; but he could not bring himself to remain longer in Mossett, inactive, waiting for Thorpe to speak. He boarded an early train for Boston with Doctor North.

Conley met him at the South Station. "Here's that telegram you asked me to get at your room," he said.

Ashley read it, jammed it back into its envelope, and then into his pocket.

Conley watched him, frowning; then, as Ashley led the way hastily uptown, began his report.

"I looked up that automobile number for you," he said, "and that car you saw down at Mossett belongs to Felix Ischenberg, a lawyer in the Barristers' Building."

Ashley made a note of the fact without comment.

"Ischenberg was Newhall's lawyer, and did most of his dirty work for him. Where does he come in on this case?" demanded Conley.

"Can't stop now. Tell you later," responded Ashley. "What about the Newhall auto?"

Conley looked mutinous. Ashley had to ask him a second time.

"Back in its garage again," growled his disappointed assistant. "The chauffeur jumped it on a side street in Westborough between eleven and twelve on the night Newhall cashed in."

"Search it?"

"Nothing to it."

"Any trace of the chauffeur?"

"Not so much as a thumb print. No one in Westborough saw hide nor hair of him. Jack," Conley seemed temporarily to forget his grievance, "that chauffeur's beginning to look to me like the goods. I looked him up here this morning. He took out the auto before seven on the morning that Newhall died, and never a token of him since—

dropped out of sight as deftly as a co-respondent in a divorce suit."

"Go on, Con," cried Ashley eagerly.

"His name's Kenney. I ran him down to a furnished-room house on Tremont Street, near Dover—hard neighborhood, hangout for 'dips' and 'strong-arm men.' Of course, his landlady was leery—couldn't get a word out of her with a crowbar—but I hung round and got next to the cook. Kenney, he gives up his room on the morning he takes out the Newhall auto, says he's off on a drive to Chicago, doesn't know when he'll get back."

"Any baggage?"

"Took a suit case with him; left his trunk behind."

"What about his mail?"

"Told 'em to throw it away."

The two men looked at each other.

"Con," exclaimed Ashley, after a moment, "it looks to me as though you'd stirred big game! One of us——"

"'One of us!'" mocked Conley. "Now, just you back up! Where do I fit?"

"Meaning what?"

"You can't expect me to work on in the dark. If you want me to do any real cunning gumshoe work on this case, come across—put me wise to what you know. Your humble assistant's getting sore."

Ashley walked on beside him in silence. "Con," he said, after they had gone a few rods, "a friend of mine is getting all sewed up in this—I may not want to handle it the way you'd like—I may want to keep it quiet——"

"I sorter sensed *that* much," proffered Conley.

"Con," responded Ashley, "I'm afraid the booze might get you."

Conley laughed mirthlessly. "I got up yesterday morning and drank my bath," he replied. "I ain't saying 'Never again,' but it's nothing but beer for me, for a time, at least."

Silence for another block. Suddenly Ashley stopped, and turned toward his companion. "Con," he declared, "I'm going to take you in. I don't know where I stand—I'm worried to death—but I need you with me. I'm going to tell you everything, and count on you to keep quiet."

"You interest me strangely, stranger," Conley's words were jocular, but he held out his hand.

CHAPTER XIX.

The two reporters left the bright sunlight of the June day behind, and entered the house where Bertrand Newhall had settled his long account. Doors and windows remained tightly sealed against the light; it was like stepping from day into night. As soon as their eyes became accustomed to the blinding darkness, Ashley led the way upstairs.

He switched on the electric light in the hall above. "Henderson was on his hands and knees just about here when the sergeant found the bag," he muttered. "Let's see if they left the bag for us first."

With Conley at his heels, he dashed along the hall into the sewing room, and turned a light there. On a small oak table lay the green cloth bag. Leaving Conley to examine its contents, Ashley hurried back into the hall.

"Con!" An odd note in his comrade's cry made Conley drop the empty bag, and hurry out into the hall. Ashley was lying flat on the floor. He had turned back the rug at the side of the hall; his eyes were riveted upon a small mark on the polished surface of the floor. He raised himself on one elbow, moved aside, and beckoned Conley to join him. "What would you say that was?" he demanded, with suppressed excitement.

Conley crouched down and scrutinized the mark which Ashley pointed out. It was a slight depression in the smooth surface, one such as might be made by a man stepping heavily upon the head of a wire nail. Conley looked up. "Not being on to what you think, I can't tell you what it is," he ventured, with a grin.

Ashley's face failed to relax. "That's the mark of a shell," he said. "It lay here among the fringe of the rug, and some one stepped on it. The impression is almost perfect. See, you can

even make out the groove around the head of the shell. And it's the shell of a high-powered, smokeless cartridge used in an automatic—no other cartridge is made heavy enough to leave such a mark as this."

Conley examined it again. This time he looked up more seriously. "You're right, Jack—dead right! But that means——"

"It means that two shots were fired; that Henderson found the shell the night before last; that he got the pistol out of the creek last night; that he's known facts all this time we've been floundering around trying to substantiate theories—which proves that he's been gulling us for two whole days, while he worked up a case. Two days' start!" Ashley groaned.

"The sneaking crab!" Conley's face was purple. "So that was why he bought me a drink!" Conley's fingers worked. "I wouldn't mind his beating us to it, but to double-cross us like this—maybe I wouldn't like to decorate his face for him!"

But Ashley did not heed, nor did he delay to vent his own resentment. His quick eyes were already gauging distances, his brisk mind was already transforming known facts into events, and matching up events into the probable form of the tragedy recently enacted in that empty house. He set about putting them in rehearsal.

He placed Conley on the landing where Newhall's body had been found. "You're just about his height," he stated. "Now, stand here a minute." He ran up the four steps to the hall above. "This light was out; the only light was in here." He switched off the light in the hall, turned on the one in the sewing room, and appeared in the doorway, facing Conley. "Two shots were fired," he announced. "One by Newhall, and the other by some one standing in this hall or sewing room." He advanced a few steps into the hall. "Now, the position of the shell shows that one man fired from about here." He raised his pistol arm. "I could send a ball into your heart from here. Where would your shot go?"

Conley raised his arm. "I could pot any part of you."

"Miss me—miss me!" ordered Ashley impatiently. "Where then?"

"Into the walls on either side—but only an ass *could* miss you from here."

"Overshoot!" yelled Ashley eagerly.

"Can't, without going into the ceiling."

A sudden look of hope altered Ashley's whole bearing. "Come on, Con, we need stepladders," he cried. He dashed past Conley.

They secured them from the cellar. Each perched on the top of one, in a few minutes the two men were making a careful scrutiny of the ceiling in the upper hall. Not a mark of a shot appeared on it. Ashley went over the entire ceiling again, after Conley had given up. Finding nothing, he moved his stepladder into the sewing room. There also the ceiling was unmarred.

The exultation had quite gone from his manner as he clambered down. "Well, I suppose we might as well look for it in the walls," he said, in a tone which betrayed his disappointment. But they went over every part of the three walls of the outer hall, and every inch of the four walls of the sewing room, without discovering a trace of a shot.

"He might have undershot. We haven't been over the rest of this floor," suggested Conley.

On their knees, they ran their hands over the rug, removed it, and went as carefully over the floor beneath.

"If Mr. Bertrand Newhall fired any shot except at himself, he fired a blank cartridge," declared Conley, at last. He went on talking, but Ashley did not listen. He was sitting dispiritedly upon the floor now, his head resting upon one hand and knee—the picture of despair. Finally, Ashley roused himself to make a last hopeless survey of the surroundings. His eye fell upon an open transom over the door between the hall and the sewing room—stopped there.

"You didn't move that transom, did you?" he cried, suddenly jumping to his feet.

"No!" Conley, sharing his excite-

ment, ran into the sewing room. Before he could place the ladder there, Ashley had mounted the other one in the hall, and was running his fingers nervously over the outer sill of the window. They encountered something. Scrambling up another step, in his excitement, he nearly fell. Saving himself by a quick clutch at the window frame, his eyes shot to the place where his hand had been.

"Con, Con, I've found it!" he yelled, in a voice which echoed through the empty house.

Perched on the top of the stepladders on either side of the open transom, the two men scanned intently a slight furrow in the wood on its outside sill.

"It went in there, through the open transom," said Ashley. His eyes flashed.

"Yes—but where is it?" demanded Conley.

Ashley already had his eye leveled to the furrow. "It's right in line," he said. "Look! Look!" He pointed to an iron ventilator high up on the rear wall of the sewing room. "It went through one of the holes in that," he cried triumphantly.

"That's all right," acknowledged Conley. "But what I would like to know is: What of it? We knew there had been two shots the minute we found the mark of the other shell. This isn't proving anything more."

Ashley laughed happily. "Oh, Con," he said. "Can't you see? This shot could never have touched here without passing through the man in the hall. Newhall fired before this man got out there in the hall. Bertrand Newhall fired the first shot."

Conley gazed through the open transom at his companion on the other side. Gradually his sodden face beamed.

CHAPTER XX.

Conley dropped down to the floor, came out, and stood looking at his companion. Ashley remained perched on the top of his ladder, meditating. "That's good as far as it goes," said Conley, "but it doesn't clear your friend. Even if Newhall did fire the first shot, Thorpe's up against a charge of manslaughter."

Ashley remained silent.

"At best, you dope it out as a duel, don't you?" persisted Conley.

"Duel!" Ashley jerked free from his abstraction. "Duel—with one man, disguised, sneaking up a dark stairway and the other standing exposed in the full light of this doorway! That doesn't explain it to me, knowing the characters of the two men—Thorpe never would have been lured into a duel, and can you see Bertrand Newhall missing his first shot without firing again?" Ashley descended grudgingly to the floor. "And yet"—Ashley fumbled hastily in his pockets—"that telegram you gave me at the station points the same way. I telegraphed the manufacturers yesterday, and learned that the pistol found with Newhall had been placed by them with Webb & Chase, of Worcester. Here's what Webb & Chase have to say about the man who bought it from them."

Conley removed the telegram from its envelope, and read:

> Colt automatic pistols 468,912 and 468,913 sold Wednesday last 10 a. m. Purchaser, E. J. Walsh, short, stout, about thirty, chauffeur's uniform; large, red wart right side of face. WEBB & CHASE.

Conley's face set. "Newhall's chauffeur buys two pistols under a false name forty miles away, ten or twelve hours before they're used. Gee! but that shows some classy premeditation."

"Yes, and Newhall was probably with him. That looks like a prearranged duel, doesn't it? But wait! While Newhall was buying those pistols, Thorpe was taking leave of his sister and mother in unusually high spirits, admitting that he was to meet Newhall, and predicting a complete reconciliation. Conley"—Ashley paused for a few impressive moments—"there are, so far as we know now, just three men who could throw any light upon what happened here two nights ago. They are Newhall, Thorpe, and that chauffeur. Of these, one is dead, another may not be able to speak a word

for weeks, the third has dropped out of sight. It's up to us to locate that chauffeur, Kenney."

"Here I am, ready to hop on his trail, but where shall I pick it up?"

"I've been thinking about that," mused Ashley. "From the neighborhood in which he lived, and from the way he slipped his baggage and left no address, Kenney seems to me like a man with a record. Now he's probably run away to lose himself in New York—they all go there—and the more we know about him the better. Suppose you go down to police headquarters, see if he's been 'mugged,' and, if he has, get his record."

Conley delayed only so long as it required to prove that the shot had passed through the ventilator. They searched in vain for any scar upon the inner register. But, holding lighted matches through its vents, they finally sighted what they sought. The shot had mushroomed against the inside brick wall of the narrow ventilating shaft.

Ashley locked the door upon Conley's departure, restored things in the house to their proper places, and switched out the lights. Then he sank down in a chair in the dark front hall to consider the baffling perplexities of the case.

Henderson knew that two shots had been fired; Henderson knew of Thorpe's engagement with Newhall on the night of the latter's death; Henderson probably had in his possession the second pistol, thrown into the creek by Thorpe; Henderson had completed a strong chain of circumstantial evidence against Thorpe. And yet Henderson had refrained so far from announcing a single one of his discoveries in the *Eagle*. Why? Because he was working in league with the police. As soon as they located and arrested Thorpe, Henderson would print his sensational story, would make the most famous "beat" recorded in the annals of the Boston press.

And the appearance of that story would prejudice the entire community against Thorpe, would convince the public that he was guilty. Henderson would not state who had bought the cap worn by Newhall; he would not specify who had purchased the pistols. To do this would weaken his story, make it less convincing. And, most important of all, Ashley doubted whether Henderson was aware that Newhall had fired the first shot. That fact alone gave an entirely different aspect to the case.

How could he prevent this frightful injustice from being done to Alice Thorpe's brother?

If he could only write that first story himself. Every circumstance could be mentioned, every fact set down in its place, and yet a fair doubt left in the mind of the reader as to Thorpe's guilt. It would help—that kind of a story! The jury which would try Thorpe would be chosen from this community. Its members would take their seats more or less influenced for or against Thorpe by what they had read. That was inevitable.

Gradually a purpose formed in Ashley's mind. He prepared a plan of action against certain contingencies. This completed, his mind scrambled back to the tantalizing mystery, took up and considered all the known facts, tried to evolve a working theory from them as to just what had happened.

Suddenly the flash of a new idea lit up Ashley's face. He jumped up and abruptly left the house.

That morning, he was closeted for a long time with Doctor North in the latter's office. Afterward Ashley hastily got in touch with Conley. The two reporters took the next train to Mossett.

CHAPTER XXI.

As soon as they were seated in the train, Conley drew an oblong piece of pasteboard from his pocket, and, without comment, handed it to Ashley. Mounted upon one side were two photographs, one in profile, the other full face, of a heavy-faced, thick-lipped, small-eyed young Irishman. His forehead retreated quickly above his eyebrows, and his chin as quickly below his lips; the whole effect was weak rather

than criminal. On his right temple appeared a large wart.

Ashley turned the card over, and read:

DETECTIVE BUREAU, POLICE DEPARTMENT.
City of Boston.
No. A. 3612.

Name: James J. Kenney.
Alias: James J. Kelley.
Crime: Mingling in a crowd.
Age: 26.
Height: 5 feet 5¼ in.
Weight: 155.
Build: Med. stout.
Hair: Light brown.
Eyes: Blue.
Complexion: Med. light.
Mustache.
Born: New York.
Occupation: Mechanic.
Arrested: April 19, 1903.
Officer: Hesseltine.
Remarks: Vac. sc. of 2.4 x 2 at 7.5 below left shoulder; large, red wart on right temple. Given hours to leave city. Six months for picking pockets in New York.
Bertillon measurements: 65.6; 66.1; 87.1; 18.3; 15.9; 6.2; 26.3; 11.5; 9.1; 44.4.

Ashley looked up. "That's our man," said he. "But the record's old. Looks as though he had reformed a good many years ago."

"Did you ever know a confirmed crook of twenty-six to reform?" Conley asked.

Ashley replied, without hesitation: "No—not unless he had squealed on some bigger crook, and was afraid of his vengeance."

"You know what the police dope on these small crooks is worth?" suggested Conley acidly.

"Yes—about as complete and up to date as a cigar stand in a railroad station—but it's useless to bother further with Mr. Kenney just now." Ashley slipped the photograph into his pocket.

Conley fidgeted. "You mean you're going to let his trail get cold?"

"Con," Ashley responded, with a forced calmness, "we'd only waste our time at present looking for Kenney anywhere east of the Hudson River. He's gone to New York to lose himself. I don't undervalue his importance, but it would be like fishing for a watch in the ocean, and"—his face grew troubled—"we've got other things to face just now." He checked further mutiny on Conley's part by telling him his plans.

Mrs. Higgins opened the door of the Newhall house the width of a chain lock, and peered through at the two men waiting impatiently upon the front porch. Then, before they could speak, she closed it, and they heard the bolt shoot into place. The reporters looked at each other, speechless.

"We're almost as welcome as scarlet fever," ventured Conley.

"Wait a minute! Listen!" warned Ashley.

The sound of women's voices raised in argument came to them through the closed door. Shortly it was opened wide by Alice Thorpe. As they entered, they had just a glimpse of Miss Newhall retreating sullenly into the library.

Alice Thorpe signed for silence, and conducted them upstairs to her brother's room. "Oh, I'm so glad you've come back again," she said, as soon as the door was closed.

Ashley introduced Conley. "Why—has anything happened?" he asked, after a hasty glance at her brother, asleep upon the bed.

"No—only—but one does feel the need of a man about in times like these." As she turned away, a faint tinge of color came to her cheeks.

Ashley caught the twinkle in Conley's observant eyes, and hastily suggested an explanation for her confusion. "Yes," said he quickly; "I noticed you were having trouble again with Miss Newhall."

Alice Thorpe rushed impetuously to the defense of her friend. "You mustn't be too hard on her," she urged. "I don't think that you appreciate the situation entirely. Bertrand Newhall kept so hard a side toward every one else that no one ever suspected how fond he was of Dorothy. You see her only as a spoiled child—well, he made her so. He gave her everything—more than she wanted. I never knew him to deny her but one thing"—her voice dropped—"that was my brother."

After a short pause, she went on: "Of course, she admired her father. How could she help being fond of one

so kind to her? She even gave up Walter for him. And yet she has allowed us all to come here and use her house as though it were our own. I can't forget that!"

"I didn't know that Bertrand Newhall was so fond as that of anybody." Ashley's interest was heated.

"Yes—and perhaps that was why he committed suicide—when he had lost all her money."

Ashley was staring fixedly out of the window, but it was plain that he saw nothing. Suddenly his face lighted up. His eyes went eagerly to Alice Thorpe, as if he wanted to tell her something. Then, as suddenly, the light disappeared from his face. He turned and gave his attention to her brother.

CHAPTER XXII.

Having assured himself that Thorpe was still unable to speak, Ashley withdrew with Conley to the room which he had formerly occupied. The door shut and locked, Conley's bleary blue eyes kindled with comprehension.

"Jack," he broke out, "I guess you're in for a lot of trouble with that other she-one, but Miss Thorpe—she's the works, take it from me!" His manner was congratulatory; somehow, Ashley found it annoying. He nodded his head and changed the subject.

"Con," he said, "it's time we proved up something. I want you to go down on the marsh, get mud on your shoes, and then go over to Mossett, and look up a bootblack. You ought to find one at the hotel there."

Conley nodded. "You want me to make sure it was Henderson who got hold of that pistol last night," he said quickly.

"Yes—and to learn whether Henderson is working here alone, or has some of the police with him. We must know at once just how near they are to closing in on us. But be careful—don't let them shadow you back here."

"Leave it to me."

Ashley watched Conley make a detour round the cliff to avoid the appearance of coming from the Newhall house, then he went quietly downstairs. His plans demanded that he should see Alice Thorpe alone, and at once. Hushed voices, coming from the library, warned him that some one was with her—probably Miss Newhall. For some time he hesitated, then he knocked on the door.

"May I see Miss Thorpe a moment?" he asked, without entering.

She appeared in the door, but, before he could speak, his eye fell on Miss Newhall standing behind, on guard. He saw at once that she had no intention of leaving them alone together. To avoid a clash, he dissembled his first intention.

"I need some paper—a lot of it—typewriter paper, if there is such a thing in the house," he asserted.

Miss Newhall secured it for him, but she made a point of taking Alice Thorpe along with her, and she still hung about while Ashley received it and expressed his thanks.

Retreating to his room, Ashley left the door open, sat down, and listened. Once the closing of a door brought him eagerly to Thorpe's room. But it was only Mrs. Higgins, with food and water for the patient. Again footsteps, unmistakably Alice Thorpe's, lured him out into the upper hall. There she was in the front hall downstairs. But Miss Newhall was with her, and remained near her with a discouraging persistence.

Ashley's face clouded. He had already lost nearly an hour. He could not make a move until Miss Thorpe consented to one thing. He disliked to ask this in Miss Newhall's presence, but plainly she was determined to keep him from seeing Alice Thorpe alone. Finally, the inaction getting on his nerves, he descended, knocked on the library door, and entered.

Alice Thorpe was sitting in a corner of a large, long couch; in her lap, unheeded, lay a book. She was staring so intently out of the window that she did not notice Ashley's entrance. For one hopeful instant he thought he had found her alone—that Miss Newhall might have been called to Boston by some

detail relating to her stepfather's funeral. Then a jarring sound drew his attention to the other end of the room. Miss Newhall had scraped her great, high-backed chair violently back. She crossed the big room, and sat down beside Alice Thorpe—on guard.

The action was so flagrantly hostile that Ashley felt an involuntary drawing-in of his purpose. He had decided to take them completely into his confidence. His ire—helped by a slight but disconcerting feeling of jealousy—changed his impulse.

"I hoped to have a talk with you alone," he said to Alice Thorpe, doing his best to conceal his anger.

"Alice has agreed not to see you alone," interfered Miss Newhall arrogantly.

Ashley saw Alice Thorpe nod her head, felt that she avoided his eyes. It made him reckless. "It isn't pleasant to be regarded as an enemy, when you're doing your best to help," he said bitterly.

"I form my own opinions of people," responded Alice Thorpe calmly. "You mustn't jump to any conclusion that I don't trust you—for I do."

Ashley determined to put her to the test. "I had a long talk with Doctor North this morning," he began. "He told me that your brother is suffering from a small clot of blood upon the brain. Left to himself, it may be a long time before he will be able to speak. All this delay is dangerous. It is vital that we should know—know at once—what he has gone through. We have determined on an experiment."

Miss Newhall's eyes snapped. "No," she cried, starting to rise. Alice Thorpe drew her back on the couch, took her hand. "Go on," she said calmly.

"Miss Thorpe, at eight o'clock tonight I want you to let me take your brother away from here for a few hours."

Miss Newhall started, laughed mirthlessly. "As if she would let you do that!" she exclaimed scornfully.

Again Alice Thorpe checked her, turned coolly to Ashley. "What for?" she asked.

"An experiment—I cannot tell you more." Ashley looked significantly toward Miss Newhall.

Alice Thorpe seemed to understand. "Where do you wish to take him?"

"To Boston—in a closed automobile—Doctor North will be with us—that's all I can tell you. Of course, if you feel you can't trust me to that extent and——"

Alice Thorpe did not hesitate an instant. "Yes," she murmured. "I am sure you wouldn't try anything which would harm Walter."

Her consent came so quickly that it took Miss Newhall by surprise. For a moment she seemed actually to struggle for words. Then she burst out in a very transport of rage. "Yesterday he said this was the only safe place for Walter—now he wants to take him away—you can't trust him—he intends to turn Walter over to the police—I know—I know—I know!"

Her denunciation of him and his intentions were audible to Ashley all his way back upstairs. He shut his door to keep from hearing them.

CHAPTER XXIII.

All the rest of that morning Ashley, shut in his room, wrote steadily. At one o'clock the luncheon bell rang. He did not hear it. An hour later Alice Thorpe appeared. He thanked her abstractedly, took the tray which she carried, and set it down upon a chair. At three, when she returned, she found him still writing in a room which reeked with cigarette smoke.

"The dishes? Oh, I guess I forgot all about eating," he stammered. He looked at the food irritably, as though it might have reminded him. "If you could send Mrs. Higgins up in a few minutes," he suggested.

Alice Thorpe smiled. "I won't interrupt you again. Mrs. Higgins has been discharged."

"Discharged!" Ashley came back at once.

"Yes. Miss Newhall said she caught her listening to us this morning, and discharged her on the spot. I'm afraid

she was a little hasty about it—that we provoked her, and she took it out on Mrs. Higgins, poor woman!"

The news troubled Ashley, but, after a time, he resumed his writing. When Conley returned, about five that afternoon, Ashley was folding a huge batch of manuscript.

"Hello, what have you got there?" inquired Conley.

"Something to take the curse off any bad luck. Now, if they get us in a tight place, I've got something to pull on them." Ashley carefully placed the manuscript in his hip pocket.

"Well, here's hoping," said Conley. "Oh, I'm with you right up to the yawning, yearning, hungry chasm," he shifted in answer to a questioning look from Ashley, "only there's some sort of a low-down hanker in me as says the 'skirt' doesn't live that's the equal of a good story. Gee! A woman never reigns but she pours!"

He failed to get the "rise" he had played for; Ashley appeared about as willing to discuss the point as the umpire in a major-league baseball game. "And then came 'silence like a poultice'—Clarence, me boy, I tell yer that he l-loves the gyurl as she were himself!" muttered Conley. His twinkling eyes lighted upon the dishes. "You're dining early!"

"I'm lunching late," responded Ashley quickly, preparing to attack the food.

While he ate, Conley made his report. He had spent most of the morning at the Mossett Inn. Henderson had been there, under an assumed name, since six o'clock the night before.

"He's your man on the marsh, all right," Conley announced. "He came back to the inn after twelve last night, and made a hit with the woman who runs it by pounding on the door until she got up to let him in. She suspishes him of having bad habits, getting in so late."

"He has the bad habit of getting ahead of us," lamented Ashley, thinking of the loss of the pistol. "Is he there alone?"

"Yes, so far as I could learn. That's what kept me so long. He came back to luncheon about one. I beat it to the barber shop across the street to keep watch. He's making up to about everybody round, but I didn't see him talking to any one who didn't seem to belong to this mossy little burg, and, anyway, he isn't likely to get much out of them. What do you suppose they take him for?"

Ashley shook his head.

"A lobster spotter. Many a fisherman round here has been keeping the wolf from the door by selling short lobsters. They've seen him prowling about the cliff and beach over here, added nothing to something, and piped him off for a sure-enough State inspector. One fisherman coming into the cove this morning with a boatload of shorts saw Henderson coming down the cliff. My, but he just loves Henderson! He dumped his whole cargo overboard."

"'Coming down the cliff,'" mused Ashley. "Well, that shows pretty clearly that he's trying to locate Thorpe. I wonder if we can manage to get Thorpe away to-night without being seen."

"Henderson went up to Boston on the four-o'clock train."

Ashley brightened. "Then, if he doesn't get the six down, we're safe, and——" He did not finish, but his hand rested significantly for a second upon the pocket in which he had placed his manuscript.

Some one fumbling at the knob of the door caused Ashley to open it. Outside stood Alice Thorpe, with another great tray.

"I thought you might not care to come downstairs to dinner," she explained.

Ashley took the tray from her. "I—I have only just eaten what you brought me before," he stammered.

"But Mr. Conley—I am sure he must want something," she insisted.

"Seeing I've been neither fed nor annoyed by anything except a few shopworn bananas——" Conley made a dive for the tray.

As she went, Ashley heard her laugh

—for the first time—and his ears found it good.

Conley jerked off the napkin, squared himself to a pleasant function. "This gets me!" he proclaimed. "Any 'looker' like her who'll bring food for two men, up two flights, without so much as a hint—well, I'm for her."

While his companion cleared the plates, Ashley made up his mind that he must inform Miss Thorpe more definitely regarding his plans. He had intended to do this, but he had not dared attempt it before Miss Newhall. Now would come his chance, when she returned for the tray.

But one of the maids came for the dishes. The sight of her seemed to recall something to Conley. As soon as she had gone, he turned to Ashley. "By the way," he broke out, "what's become of that other biscuit shooter, the one who tried to bar us out this morning?"

"Miss Newhall caught her eavesdropping, and discharged her."

Conley whistled.

"What's the matter?" inquired Ashley quickly.

"Oh, nothing, only the old girl's over at the inn where Henderson's staying. If she's sore, she may have put him wise."

CHAPTER XXIV.

To a man of action, suspense is like a nagging wife. During the ensuing two hours, Ashley showed so much nervousness and irritation that Conley kept staring at him in surprise. New doubts fogged a course which before had been clear. What could Mrs. Higgins have overheard of his plans? Had she told Henderson? For the first time, he rejoiced that he had not been more explicit. But she might easily have learned that they planned to take Thorpe away at eight that night. Even if she did not know this, all Henderson needed to frustrate his plans was to learn where Thorpe was hidden. Had he gone to Boston for the police—or to write his story? Either of these moves would be fatal to Ashley's purposes.

Tormented by these uncertainties, he welcomed the work of helping Conley to dress the patient for the journey. Thorpe's slight wound was healing fast. The prolonged rest and sleep had made him almost himself. Only the hanging corners of his mouth, his shifting eyes, and the way his face twitched when anybody addressed him, indicated his condition. They had him ready by seven. Leaving Conley on guard, Ashley ran upstairs to his room.

From its west window he kept anxious watch of the long causeway which led both to the town and the railroad station. If Henderson returned by the six o'clock train, he was due about now. If he returned with officers to make an arrest, they must cross that causeway.

The west wind brought Ashley the whistle of the train as it entered Mossett. From five to ten minutes must elapse before the conveyances would reach the crossroads at the far end of the causeway. Alternately Ashley paced the room and glared apprehensively out of the window. A cloud of dust warned him of the coming of the faster vehicles. Several automobiles shot down the hill that hid the distant station, rounded the corner, and scurried away into Mossett. After an interminable wait came the slower, horse-drawn conveyances. One after another, carriages and busses approached and turned that corner, and then—at last—one bus came straight on over the causeway.

The bright June sun made clear to him only that there were two or three people in the bus. Not until it turned the corner at the foot of the cliff would it present itself broadside, and enable him to see more. If Henderson and the police were in it, they would probably disembark at the foot of the cliff. If it stopped there—— Slowly the bus came over the causeway, crossed the bridge, approached the corner. The old horse was jerking it along so slowly that, for one second, Ashley imagined it had stopped. He held his breath. Then it rounded the corner and dragged away to the beach. Ashley breathed freely. He could make out its passengers now. They were women.

Shortly before eight, Doctor North

arrived with his own car. To escape meeting Miss Newhall, Ashley went out ahead of the others. Standing within the shadow of the porch, he witnessed a scene which affected him deeply.

The two girls had said good-by to the patient in his room. There they had managed to restrain their feelings. But when Thorpe came downstairs with Conley on one side, and Doctor North on the other, the picture was too pathetic! Alice Thorpe still managed to control herself. She smiled encouragingly at her brother, but her eyes glistened with tears. Miss Newhall, leaning against the library door, sobbed openly. It was like the departure to the hospital of one who might never return. Ashley saw Thorpe's face twitch, saw him pull at his companions as if to hasten them.

The depression of the scene seemed to hang like an omen over the four men in the car. Ashley remembered—too late—that he had neglected to acquaint Alice Thorpe with the nature of their undertaking. He was taking much upon himself. If his scheme should miscarry—a cold chill ran down his back; he shivered. Too late, he realized the responsibilities he had assumed. To avoid thinking of it, he turned his mind to the task before him.

"Did you get them?" he asked Doctor North.

Before answering, the doctor looked first at Thorpe. Then he drew something from his pocket, and kept it covered with his hand as he passed it across the car. Ashley deftly slipped it into the left-hand outside pocket of his coat. Again Doctor North went through the same action. This time Ashley passed along the object to Conley, who disposed of it as quickly in his own right-hand pocket.

"Ready for use?" demanded Ashley.

"Blank—as per instructions," responded Doctor North.

A chuckle from Conley disturbed the solemnity of the proceedings. "As I'm to be the goat in this little affair, you can't be too sure of that for me!"

"Well, I'm right on hand to attend to you," replied the doctor.

"We're chickens to-day and feather dusters to-morrow—I don't see where you doctors have ever done much to prevent that," remarked Conley.

Under cover of the jest, the three men took occasion to scrutinize their companion. Thorpe lay back in the corner beside Doctor North, apparently oblivious of all that was going on. Now and then he bent forward to glance out of the window at the shore towns through which they flashed. Always he returned humbly, unprotestingly, to his corner, his eyes fixed straight ahead.

As they approached the outskirts of Boston, Ashley held a whispered conversation with Conley. Then he gave an order to the chauffeur. In a few minutes, the car drew up before a small drug store. Conley got out and entered the telephone booth.

He returned and slipped back into his seat beside Ashley. "I talked with Gallagher," he reported. "He's no friend of Henderson's, so he was glad to gumshoe round for me. He says Henderson came into the office just after five, stopped a few minutes, and then hustled out as though chased by an idea."

"Did he leave any copy?" inquired Ashley anxiously.

"Not so far as Gallagher could learn."

"Didn't know where he went?" Ashley asked eagerly.

Conley sniffed. "Did you ever know a lone wolf like Henderson to trust anybody?" he asked scornfully.

"I'd give something to know whether he's here in Boston, or has gone back to Mossett," Ashley said.

"Take it from me, we've got his number in either case. He doesn't know enough to hurt, does he?"

Ashley did not reply, but from time to time thereafter he bent out of the window and gazed nervously back over the road.

CHAPTER XXV.

It was a sultry summer night. The benches in the park in Commonwealth Avenue were occupied only by scattered couples; and the sidewalks were deserted except for an occasional pedes-

trian. Just before ten a closed automobile which had several times been driving slowly down one side of the avenue and up the other suddenly came to a halt before the Newhall residence. Four men descended; then the chauffur ran the empty car a short distance along the curb and stopped.

Allowing Thorpe no leisure to observe where he was, Ashley and Doctor North hurried him across the sidewalk into the empty house. On the way Ashley contrived, unnoticed, to slip the pistol he had received from Doctor North into Thorpe's right-hand pocket.

Inside, Ashley passed the keys to Conley, who lurked behind by the big front door. No lights were turned on to inform the invalid of his surroundings. Doctor North produced a pocket electric lamp. By its focused flashes, the two men guided Thorpe along the echoing hall, up the somber staircase.

Still unresisting, Thorpe permitted himself to be bustled across the dark upper hall, into the narrow sewing room. Here Ashley switched on the light. On the table lay the green cloth bag, with its strange contents. Thorpe's eyes lighted up. They saw him start, shrink away from it. They held their breath and watched. Thorpe shivered, looked uncertainly about, as if about to run. Suddenly he seemed to take hold of himself. He crossed the room, and sat down in a chair beside the table. His left hand closed over the neck of the green cloth bag.

Instantly Ashley and Doctor North withdrew from his sight. They tiptoed along the hall, crept quietly into a neighboring room. For a moment—deathlike silence—not a stir or sound.

Suddenly, far away in the hall below, yet with the electric nearness of a sound in a vacant house, they heard the rattle of a key in a lock. Then came the pinpoint taps of somebody tiptoeing across the lower hall, the stealthy tread of somebody stealing up the dark stairs.

From their shadowed vantage points, the two men—their nerves ajump—watched Thorpe appear in the door of the sewing room. His eyes were starting from his head, his mouth petrified in a horror-made ellipse, his right hand closed rigidly upon the pistol in his pocket.

The tread upon the stairs continued. They saw Thorpe, still standing in the doorway of the sewing room, draw his pistol and struggle piteously to speak.

Crack! Conley had fired first.

Thorpe had fallen back, then gathered himself together and sprang out into the hall.

Crack! Thorpe had fired, too.

The echo of the two shots beat through the empty house. There was the sound of a body falling heavily upon the staircase. Then silence.

For a few binding moments, every actor in the scene stood still. It was the silence of those who cease to breathe. Then, with a cry, Thorpe ran to the staircase, lifted the body lying upon it, and gazed into the face under the chauffeur's cap.

"It isn't he," he murmured. His voice came back with a rush. "It isn't he!" he screamed.

The shock had sent the blood flowing through his atrophied brain cell. He allowed the body to drop from his hands to the steps. For one moment he stood as one freeing himself from the last strands of a bad dream. Then he turned and ran down the stairs.

When the three men came upon him in the hall below, he was striving furiously to open the front door, upon which Conley had turned the second lock. As Ashley switched on the lights, he turned and faced them.

"I—I——" he stared at them, dazed; then again he tried the door.

Ashley started toward him. Suddenly he stopped and stared at Doctor North in blank amazement. Outside, some one was putting a key in the lock!

Astounded, Ashley watched Thorpe, waiting catlike, saw him jerk open the door as it was unlocked, heard the clamor of strange voices as Thorpe flung himself through it. Astounded, he ran after him.

Outside, on the steps, Thorpe was struggling in the arms of three policemen!

CHAPTER XXVI.

The jig was up! The experiment had confirmed Ashley's theory, had afforded him additional clews, had even restored Thorpe's speech—but at what a cost! Thorpe was under arrest—irretrievably lost—no more information could be obtained from him. Ashley realized this the instant that he saw Sergeant Smith.

Still, something must be saved from this wreckage of his plans. Ashley stood in the shadow of the doorway, and looked over the wreckers. His eye fell on Henderson. Ashley slipped back into the hall, grabbed Conley by the arm, and turned out the light.

"Con, it's up to you," he whispered breathlessly. "Henderson's out there in the crowd. You've got to hide away here until they're gone. Then beat it to the office. Here's the story!" He tore the manuscript from his hip pocket and thrust it into Conley's hands.

"What about Henderson?" protested Conley.

"Leave him to me!" Ashley's manner and words were sharp, whetted to an edge to suit the exigency. He dared not allow Henderson out of his sight for a moment more than was necessary. He had no more than finished with Conley than he had Doctor North by a lapel of his coat.

"North," he said, "I want your car."

Doctor North was a man made also for emergencies. "All right, I think I'd prefer to slip away unnoticed," he said at once.

"Tell your chauffeur to do whatever I order." Ashley hurried out, down the steps into the crowd.

Henderson saw him, and pushed through the crowd to his side.

"Well, well, well! See who's here!" he saluted Ashley. "Bursting with suppressed news? Hadn't you better hustle that story of yours in?" he asked sarcastically.

Ashley smiled. "Guess the *Eagle*'ll be willing to wait for what I've got."

"Shut off your power, your steering gear's busted?"

"Wait and see," said Ashley.

"You've got milk in your gasoline tank," retorted Henderson, and hurried off to spring on the steps of the starting patrol wagon.

Ashley ran up the street to the North automobile, and jumped into the seat beside the chauffeur. "Follow—at a distance," he ordered. As soon as they were under way, he stole an estimating glance at the driver. He was a thin-faced, young Irishman, chewing tobacco.

"Get your orders from Doctor North?" he demanded.

"Sure!" The chauffeur bent a pair of twinkling blue eyes upon him. "Looks as though he'd sold me to you along with the car."

Ashley smiled grimly. "How are you on night work—good for all night?"

"References, any night-lunch wagon in the city."

Ashley spread out a twenty-dollar bank note upon his knee. "That's coming to you, if we pull off what I want to," he promised.

"I can feel it. I'm going to let you call me by my first name," rejoined the driver, without hesitation.

Ashley outlined the part that the automobile was to take in that night's proceedings. As he finished, the patrol wagon drew up at the police station, and the chauffeur, at his direction, brought the car to the curb a few rods away.

Ashley watched the police disembark with their prisoner and enter the station. As soon as he saw Henderson follow them inside, he jumped down from his seat.

"Now's the time," he cried. "Get your gasoline tank filled to the brim. The quicker you get back, the more chance we have to make it."

A gurgle and a rasp—and the automobile was off, drowning, with its noise, the chauffeur's rejoinder. Ashley stood on the curb, waiting, plotting. A gasp and a gurgle—and Ashley jumped to escape an automobile which whizzed up to the curb, startlingly fast and close. He turned angrily to protest. Then he laughed. "I guess you'll do," he re-

marked to the chuckling chauffeur. It was his own car.

The chauffeur leaped out. Together, they quickly closed the window on the far side of the car. After that, for a long time, they were busy with the mechanism of the door on that side

Meantime, Conley, the story buttoned tightly in an inside pocket, waited impatiently for the patrolman to disappear from the front of the Newhall house. Five—ten minutes passed, then he unlocked the inner door, and set an eye to the keyhole of the outer one. He saw no one. He unlocked the outer door and opened it a crack—only to shut it precipitately. On the sidewalk, a policeman was carrying on a dawdling conversation with a humble but curious citizen.

Ten minutes longer, chafing and cursing, he listened to the drone of their talk. At last it died away. Conley stepped out and fastened the doors. As his foot touched the bottom step, the policeman, half a block away, hailed him.

Conley ran. Without looking behind, he rushed down the avenue, turned the corner, bolted through the long alley, and took the next cross street to Boylston. The motorman of an outward-bound electric scrambled his passengers, called Conley rude but immortal names as he grazed by its fender. The conductor of an inward-bound car had an attack of heart failure as, mid-block, and on the wrong side, Conley leaped for its footboard. But neither of these irritated employees received the quick answer which turneth on wrath. Panting, Conley wormed his way under the side rail of the flying electric, and fell into a seat between two resentful fat women.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A few minutes after eleven, Henderson came down the steps of the police station, and hastened toward the nearest corner for a car. His round face advertised it; he viewed himself with approval, was tasting the fruits of victory —and they tasted good.

As he neared the North automobile, Ashley gave the chauffeur an order, started to enter the car, then appeared to relent. "Have a ride?" he demanded ungraciously.

Henderson saw a chance to make a flourish with his triumph. "Going my way?" he asked, clambering in.

"Guess we're both bound for the same place," snapped Ashley, shutting the door behind him with unnecessary violence.

Henderson found an amiable satisfaction in Ashley's ill temper. It was sauce to his success. He lolled far back in the capacious car, put his feet on the front seat, and chuckled. "I knew you had him," he boasted.

"When?"

"This afternoon. Take my advice. When you're hiding a man, don't have trouble with the help in the house."

"Yes—I knew you knew. But tell me one thing: Why didn't you arrest Thorpe then?"

"It saved taking the police down, my letting you bring him up here. I had you in sight all the way up." Henderson was enjoying it keenly. His eyes dwelt on Ashley, that he might lose nothing.

Ashley's discomfort was obvious. "Well, you've got him," he admitted; "but let me tell you one thing, Henderson, no jury will ever find him guilty."

Henderson laughed. "It strikes me you take a heap of interest in that Thorpe family," he shot, at random.

Ashley made no reply.

Henderson's eyes widened. "Perhaps Miss Thorpe could tell something about that," he urged.

"You can cut that out, Henderson," said Ashley quietly.

"Ah!" Henderson's attention floated out through the window on this new idea. Suddenly he started. There were no grassplots like that before the houses on the way downtown. Could——

He sat up. "Where are you taking me?" he demanded.

"Oh, just on a little drive through the country. You ought to enjoy it on a hot night like this." Ashley closed the win-

dow on his side. As if it were a signal, the car went faster.

Henderson studied the landscape. They were well out on the Beacon Boulevard, bowling along at fully fifteen miles an hour, and the *Eagle*—he looked at his watch—went to press in an hour and a half. He made a jump for the door, wrenched violently at its handle.

Ashley made no attempt to stop him. "You might save your energy," he announced, after a moment, "that door happens to be wedged."

Henderson drew back in his seat. It was worse than he thought.

"When does this little joy ride end?" he asked, with suddenly assumed good humor.

"Not for several hours."

Henderson sprang across the car, and pounded on the front window. The chauffeur turned—grinned in his face.

Henderson slumped back in his seat and meditated. They had entered the car through the door on Ashley's side. There lay his way of escape. Waiting until the car was rounding a corner, he threw himself toward it.

But here, for the first time, he encountered active opposition. Ashley's two arms went round his body just below the shoulders, forced him slowly but steadily back into his seat. The struggle strained Henderson's muscles, and made him pant.

"I'll make this cost you something," he threatened, as soon as he regained his breath.

"I don't think you'll ever care to mention this little occurrence to anybody," returned Ashley coolly.

"I won't?" yelled Henderson. "Well, I'd just like to know why not?"

Ashley looked at him. "For the simple reason," he said, "that if you ever let it out, you'll be joshed out of the business. Don't think for a minute that I don't know just what I'm doing."

Henderson fell back on silence. There was no answer to this simple but exact statement.

It was half-past three in the morning when the car finally returned over that ground, after a long ramble through adjacent countries. One of the windows was broken, where Henderson had thrust his foot through it in a vain attempt to attract attention. Henderson was subdued, tired out, by the prolonged struggle.

"This is all very well," he broke out, after a long silence, "but you can't kidnap me like this every afternoon and evening. My story'll come out, and you can't prevent it."

"Yes," admitted Ashley carelessly.

"Then perhaps you'll tell me why you wanted to keep me from getting my beat to-night."

"I will—when you go."

"And why not now?" urged Henderson.

"Because you're feeling ugly enough as it is."

Day was dawning as the car stopped before the statehouse, and Ashley stepped out to afford egress for his companion. Henderson had hardly touched foot to ground before he asked again.

"Now," he cried angrily, "perhaps you'll enlighten me as to why you robbed your own paper of this scoop?"

"Don't worry. The *Eagle* hasn't lost it," answered Ashley.

Henderson's jaw dropped. "What do you mean?" he flared.

Ashley met his eyes coolly. "Why, nothing," he said calmly; "nothing, except that, while I took you out motoring, my own story went in."

"You—you——" gasped Henderson, for the first time in his life utterly at a loss for words.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ashley slept for five hours, and might have slept for more, but shortly after ten he was aroused by a yell outside his door, which would have done credit to a hyena. Conley burst into the room, a pack of newspapers in one hand, and a crumpled copy of the *Eagle* in the other, which he held high above his head, and waved in circles like a rocket.

"We did it," he yelled; "not a peep in any of the other papers. The beat of a lifetime!"

Ashley snatched up from the bed the copy of the *Eagle* which Conley had

thrown ecstatically at his head. "Then the police stood in—they kept the news of the arrest from the other papers for Henderson," he exclaimed.

"The police! Not only they—the whole push at the office stood in with him." Conley's face took on an ugly look.

"What!" Ashley pulled reluctant eyes from the screaming six-inch headlines.

"Ames, Dolliver, the whole yanking crowd at the office stood in so close with Henderson that they couldn't cut the air between without mangling one of them. Why, they had it all framed up! Our story for the rubbish heap!"

"I suspected that." By superb will power Ashley managed to loosen his attention from the front page of the *Eagle*. "Go on, Con, I'm listening," he added, as his eyes sneaked back to it.

"Henderson told Ames yesterday afternoon that he'd have his story in last night. Dolliver was on the night desk. He said he had orders from Ames and higher up to run Henderson's story. Wouldn't even look at ours. Why, between twelve and one last night they almost quit business—they had half a dozen men out trying to find Henderson! I guess you can imagine how I felt, hanging round, expecting Henderson to blow in every minute, and our story to get a side swipe to the floor."

"Well, there's one advantage—they didn't turn any passionate rewrite man loose on our stuff."

Conley smiled grimly. "No. They held off until the foreman came down, and got that story at the point of a gun."

Ashley threw down the newspaper. "Well, that proves one thing." He began hurriedly to dress. "The time has come for you and me to dissolve partnership."

Conley thrust his chin forward, and waved a mutinous hand.

"That's all very well, Con," rejoined Ashley. "But I have a feeling that something's going to drop, and it's up to me to see that you don't go down in the wreckage."

Conley laughed scornfully. "It's all very well to dissemble your love, but why do you kick me downstairs?" he quoted. "You can pull me off this assignment, if you want to, but—and then some."

Something did drop. City editors eat and draw pay; they may be human beings, but few suspect it except the favorites to whom they tie up. Ashley, at least, found no ground for such a suspicion, after being closeted for a few minutes with Athloe Ames.

"Come in—and get the hook," was the way that perspiring genius began the interview. "The *Eagle* isn't the U. S. Supreme Court—it's a newspaper. You had a good story, and you spoiled it. Now, I don't know just how the Thorpes managed to tamper with you, but the story shows it and it doesn't go. There's a small manila envelope padded with your unearned increment waiting for you downstairs—and there's one for Conley."

So this was the ground on which they based their resentment! Henderson had evidently been there before him. Ashley took his own discharge coolly, but he fought with bugle and drums for Conley. With a humility which puzzled himself, he stood for much to save his friend; and he finally saved Conley his job. Then, being young, he told the city editor, Athloe Ames, just about what he thought of him.

It is in the nature, if not the fitness, of things that Ashley's feet should now bear him straight to Alice Thorpe. "He had been rescued from his job," as cynical, case-hardened reporters term it; but Ashley was young, and not yet calloused by the blistering envies of life. As soon as his first admiration at visiting his wrath on Ames subsided, he felt the natural depression of a man out of work. And, in times of dejection, a man invariably turns to woman for comfort.

He had called up the Newhall house at Mossett that morning, and learned that both girls had departed for Boston. Bertrand Newhall's funeral was to be held late that afternoon. At the Thorpe house the maid took his card, and ushered him into the drawing-room.

His hopes died as Alice Thorpe en-

tered. She looked as if she had not slept. Her blue eyes had lost their softness—an expression almost relentless had crept into them. She took no notice of his outstretched hand—only stared at him. And in her look was the judgment of the disillusioned.

"They did not wish me to see you," she said, "but I thought it was better."

"I had to see you. I had to see you to explain," he pleaded.

"We all feel my brother's arrest so keenly that we want to be alone with our friends."

"Can't you still count me among them?" he asked.

She did not answer. She turned away, as though there were but one answer to that question.

The silence was unbearable. Ashley, at his worst, floundered on: "It had to come. Neither of us could have prevented your brother's arrest much longer."

"Perhaps—but I did not expect it to come through you."

Ashley winced. "Will you let me explain?" he begged.

"I would much rather you wouldn't." She moved toward the door—stood there as one trying to terminate an unpleasant interview.

Ashley started. He saw that whatever he had to say must be said quickly. "I want you to know——" but he got no further.

"Please don't—oh, please don't," she interrupted tremulously.

"But I——"

"Oh, I wish you would go—I wish you would go and leave me alone," she cried hysterically.

And, as at a signal, a man entered. "This is my brother's partner, Mr. Adams. He will hear anything you may have to say," Alice Thorpe controlled herself to say. Then, without a further word or glance, she left the room.

Ashley stood aghast at his abrupt dismissal. He was hurt, dazed.

"If you have anything to say——" Mr. Adams suggested.

Ashley looked at him with surprise; he had forgotten that he was present. "No—nothing," he said.

"Miss Newhall declares that you wrote the account which appears in this morning's *Eagle*." Mr. Adams' manner was inquiring.

"Yes—what of it?" Ashley's mounting resentment got the better of him.

"Oh, nothing!" Mr. Adams appeared to wipe his hands of the whole affair.

For one instant Ashley looked him squarely in the eyes. Then he seized his hat and left the house.

CHAPTER XXIX.

That afternoon Ashley wrote a brief note to Alice Thorpe. He made no attempt to explain. After his reception that morning, he realized that explanations would be futile—for a time—at least, while Miss Newhall had her ear. Instead, he assured her that her brother would be freed, that he hoped to help bring this about; would she merely send him the name of the attorney whom the family would retain to look after Walter Thorpe's interests?

He remained in his room until the answer came.

MY DEAR MR. ASHLEY: Since you were here, I have learned that you were not only the direct cause of my dear brother's arrest, but also the person who wrote that terrible article against him in this morning's *Eagle*.

Perhaps your professional duties required this of you, perhaps you even wrote it against your will—I do not condemn you for doing what you were probably obliged to do—but, if you have any regard for our wishes, you will not interfere with my brother's case.

This being my own and my family's earnest desire, there is consequently no occasion for sending you the name of my brother's attorney. Sincerely yours,

ALICE THORPE.

Ashley read it once. Then he read it again. Then he laughed slowly, bitterly. After a time, he sat down and wrote to her again:

MY DEAR MISS THORPE: Pardon me, it isn't pleasant to seem to meddle, but I feared that your attorney might not at once realize the importance of laying hands on the Newhall chauffeur—a man named Kenney—who has disappeared. However, I won't annoy your attorney. I intend to run down Kenney myself. I am too deeply interested in the mystery to drop it here. Sincerely,

JOHN ASHLEY.

He put the letter aside to mail, and pondered bitterly the events of that one day. Loud of hope, it had begun; empty of fulfillment, it was drawing to an end. He did not hear Conley's knock upon the door.

"See here, I wouldn't take it so heavy." Conley put his hand on the shoulder of the man saturating himself in his misfortunes. "I know of two papers here already looking toward you with jobs."

Ashley smiled. "So you've been looking up a place for me?"

Conley nodded. "Yes—but I hope you'll throw 'em both down. You don't belong here—you belong in little old New York. Boston's all right for them as like to ride in swan boats, but stay here a few years longer, and you'll get so stewed in its isms and wasms that you'll be thought-jammed. There ain't any barb wire around New York. That's the place for chances, and for a full-measure, eighteen-ounce brain man like you. Take your wad in your hand and buck it—buck it now!"

Ashley looked at him with surprise. Conley's enthusiasm was the first flattering thing which had happened to him—since the flood, it seemed. He reached out and took his hand.

"I guess you're right," he agreed. "Come on, I'm going out to clear up certain things for my get-away."

He went straight to Mr. Felix Ischenberg, attorney at law, Barristers' Building. Ashley recognized him as the man he had seen in the automobile at Mossett, but the lawyer placidly denied ever having been in Mossett, or ever having held an interview with Miss Newhall. He admitted that he was Bertrand Newhall's personal attorney. He was ready with information only on one point. Bertrand Newhall, he knew, expected an attack on his life; in fact, he had telephoned as much on the day before his death. No, there was no particular reason why he should have told him that. The lawyer laughed sneeringly, when Ashley asked him whom Newhall feared. "Don't you read your own paper?" he asked significantly, holding up a copy of the *Eagle*.

Ashley returned to his room with a collection of the afternoon newspapers. As he expected, they all followed his lead, presented the facts favorable to Thorpe, as well as those against him—that is, all except one. The *Eagle* featured Bertrand Newhall's funeral, held that afternoon in the little chapel at Mount Auburn Cemetery, wrung all the pathos from it possible. Then, below, it dwelt again on the arrest of Thorpe. By reciting all the known facts against Thorpe, and none of those in his favor, it suggested a conviction of his guilt.

"Henderson's hand! He's going after Thorpe," muttered Ashley. He threw the paper to the floor in disgust.

Ashley packed his trunk, and sent it to the station. Early that evening he rang the doorbell of the house on Tremont Street where Kenney had lodged.

After a long wait the mistress, in a long, dragging, soiled wrapper gaping at the neck, opened the door.

"Got a room with a bed?" he asked huskily.

The woman studied his clothes and his furtive manner. Finally she let him enter. Without a word, she led him up the ill-smelling stairs to a hall bedroom on the second floor.

"All I've got," she said curtly.

Ashley's eyes went straight to the small, board-ribbed, much-battered trunk against the wall. He saw that there had once been three initials on its end. Two of these had been scratched off, leaving only the final one—a K. The trunk was locked.

"Hello, some dip's gone and jumped his box," he exclaimed, kicking it lightly. It moved. Evidently there was little in it.

"That won't dangle here long ef you want the room," said the woman.

The room contained nothing else except a bed, a chair, and a washstand. Something on the washstand fluttering in the breeze caught Ashley's attention. He drifted aimlessly toward it. It was a copy of the *Detective*, a paper which publishes pictures and the rewards offered for the capture of criminals. On the margin Ashley noticed some figures.

"Well, if here ain't me old friend

Dick!" he cried, picking it up. After a casual glance at it, he used it to flick some dust from his shoes, and kept it in hand throughout the rest of their parley.

Later, going downtown in the car, he unfolded the paper for a more careful inspection. On the margin he read:

10,000
3½
30,000
5,000
35,000

"It looks to me as though Mr. Kenney had tried to figure out what the savings banks would pay him on ten thousand dollars," mused Ashley. He refolded the paper, and put it away in his pocket.

Ashley returned to his room, changed his clothes, and took the midnight train to New York.

CHAPTER XXX.

His experience in Boston had quite cured Ashley of any desire to work again for a "yellow" newspaper. With the aid of a friend already on its staff, he readily secured a place on the New York *Moon*. Here nothing counted but work and ability. Within a brief time, Ashley became the *Moon's* regular police headquarters man.

From the day of his arrival in New York, Ashley devoted all his leisure to the search for Kenney. He studied the faces of every passing chauffeur. He questioned every reporter and policeman with whom he came in contact. About police headquarters, inspectors soon came to refer to him jocularly as "the man who wants to find Kenney." He was better known by that title than by his own name. And with his fellow reporters it was the same; he seldom joined a group of them but one would begin to hum: "Has anybody here seen Kenney?"

At police headquarters, he unearthed nothing to add to what Conley had long ago secured in Boston. He had studied Kenney's photograph until he no longer needed to consult it in the saloon dives, haunted by beggars and criminals, where he spent most of his evenings. If he ever saw Kenney, he would know him, he was sure of that; but days ticked away into weeks, and weeks pegged away into months, without discovering a trace of him.

All this time Conley kept him informed of developments in Boston. Henderson was still using the *Eagle* to keep public feeling stirred up against Thorpe. No new evidence had been discovered, but he was continually combining old facts into a new aspect of guilt. His animus he covered up by giving it the appearance of a crusade undertaken in the people's interest. Thorpe had committed a crime, but Thorpe belonged to the so-called "privileged classes." He would never be punished for it if the *Eagle* and "the masses" did not keep up a hue and cry. That was Henderson's slogan.

Early in September, Conley sent word that Thorpe was to be haled before the grand jury at its next session, and added:

> Walsh, the district attorney, has gubernatorial aspirations—not this year, but later—and he has been so thick with Ames and Henderson lately that they may be pulling off something together. Guess you can put two and two together as well as I.

Ashley was called as a witness when the case came up before the grand jury. His treatment at its secret session convinced him that the district attorney was hand in glove with Henderson and Ames, and determined to win reputation by securing a conviction at any cost.

This saved him from being surprised when the grand jury later brought in an indictment against Thorpe for murder in the second degree. But it substantiated his worst fears. The district attorney evidently intended to give the encounter the aspect of a duel, fought by agreement in that closed house. This would render impotent every fact which could be brought forward in Thorpe's behalf. It made his case virtually hopeless. It explained why Bertrand Newhall should have brought Thorpe into his own house. It put an entirely different light upon the fact that Newhall had shot first

Stirred to action, Ashley resorted to an expedient which he had long neglected because he believed it would prove fruitless. Kenney's trunk was still in Boston. Ashley inserted the following "Personal" in three New York newspapers:

J. J. K. Send for your trunk in Boston. Want your address. Important letter. X.

Conley was still in touch with the cook at Kenney's former lodgings, and would let him know at once of any results. But Ashley expected nothing to come of this. His mind was made up: Kenney was too clever a criminal to be snared by such a simple trap. For nearly three months now, he had exhausted every resource without finding a single clew to Kenney's whereabouts. If he ever found him, it would likely be upon the street by accident. And it would be some task to find one man among four millions.

Ashley was just beginning to appreciate the odds against him, when, one afternoon, he found Jim Halsey's card in his box. On it was written:

Fell on something about Kenney by accident this morning. Come to see me. Nothing much.

"Nothing much!" Anything at all would be much. Ashley rushed through his work, and hurried into the subway for uptown.

Jim Halsey was an ex-reporter of the *Moon* who had mingled with the beggars and petty criminals hanging on the fringe of the underworld, until he became an authority on their habits and practices. Organized charity had called him away several years before, to act as its special policeman and investigator.

Halsey surmised Ashley's excitement from the pace at which he threaded his way among the other desks at charity headquarters.

"Don't expect too much," he began at once. "I've got only a little something about Kenney's record which may interest you. I was down at the Rogues' Gallery this morning, looking up the record of a vag who wanted us to help him, when I came upon another picture of Kenney. This mug was under the name of James J. Kelliher, but it's your man, and the record with it shows pretty clearly why Kenney quit the game. It seems that the police got some sort of a hold on Kenney a few years ago, and for a time he acted as a stool for them. Later on, the hooks got wise, and it wasn't safe for him to show his face in any of the resorts unless he wanted a knife stuck into his back. That explains why he turned honest, and why you're wasting time looking for him in any of the dives."

"Kelliher! You're sure it's the same man?"

"Positive. Here, pull your picture. I borrowed this one from headquarters."

The photographs were of the same man, and the measurements agreed.

"Here, wait a minute! I made a note of the thing which drove Kenney or Kelliher out of the business." Halsey dislodged a memorandum from the papers on his desk, and summarized its contents. "It seems that about four years ago 'Cal' Bill, a notorious yegg, had it framed up to kick in a flour-and-feed pete up Yonkers way. Kenney got onto it, and tipped off the police. Somehow they traced it back to Kenney, and that must have been just about when he turned honest. Cal Bill got sent up to Sing Sing for five years. Every hook in the business would have had a knife out for Kenney—and Cal Bill—well, when one of those men gets out, about the first thing he does is to settle a score like that."

"Yes, that would be a fine club to hold over Kenney, if I could only lay hands on him." Ashley smiled wearily. "When does Cal Bill get out?"

"Let me see—five years! With time off, he ought to be getting out about any time now."

"We couldn't follow his trail to Kenney, could we?"

Halsey laughed. "Not if you want a live man. The minute Cal Bill lays eyes on Kenney, he's a dead one."

This information saved Ashley the necessity of frequenting the saloon dives any longer, but it seemed as though this very thing diminished his

chances. He had now no place to look for Kenney except on the streets.

In a week he heard from Conley. Kenney had neither come nor sent any word to the lodging house on Tremont Street. His trunk was still there.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Ashley surely deserved better than he fared. All through that fall and winter—without trail or scent—he kept at his hunt for Kenney. And the news from Boston was such as most men would have found discouraging. This, Conley dashed off on copy paper, and sent from time to time in the form of memoranda. As it covers the important developments in the case of The Commonwealth vs. Thorpe, it is here set down:

Sept. 18.

Never saw such a grand jury. Every reporter in Boston has taken a shot at them to learn what happened. Not a leak. Dist. Att. Walsh must have thrown an awful scare into them. C.

Oct. 21.

Nothing new. H. still using *Eagle* to work up the people—masses vs. classes—oh, slush! C.

Nov. 6.

Gov. Field hired to take charge of Thorpe's side. Lawyers call it hopeless. Saw my friend, the cook at Kenney's late hang-out, yesterday. She says three detectives have been there this week after him. Cheer up, if one good live reporter can't beat out a dozen of these Hessians, label me for the dump! C.

Nov. 30.

Heard a rumor to-day that Gov. Field will never dare to put Thorpe on the witness stand. C.

Dec. 22.

What's the matter between you and Miss Thorpe? Caught in rain this afternoon. Stepped into doorway at White's. Along comes Miss Thorpe with umbrella—and she bows as she passes me by. While I was still chortling, back she comes and insists on taking me under cover.

"Ha, ha!" says I to me, "she wants news about me friend, Ashley."

So into our gentle young talk shovels I you. Just mention you casual like. Say, can you change your secretive nature in so far as to put me wise why she shut up so quick? C.

Jan. 22.

I'm thinking of putting up your name for membership in the Benevolent Order of Bartenders. You're a nice, sociable friend, are you not? You are—not! All of which appertains to the leaking out of the story of how you abducted Henderson. Ames must have let it out, and H. is so sore he can't stand the touch of padded hands. The story's going down the line like smallpox. And me one of the last to be on! You mighta put me next. There ain't no shame in kidnaping a full-grown man. C.

March 24.

Passed you up for a time because you wouldn't answer questions. Decided to forgive you and be friends again. You ought to know it. H. is extending himself in the *Eagle* agitating an early trial—and Dist. Att. Walsh has lined up with him. C.

Apl. 18.

Gov. Field beaten. Thorpe case set for trial in May session. C.

Apl. 19.

I'm handing you the only consolation in sight. Ames and H. have so committed the *Eagle* against Thorpe that, if they fail to convict him, it's the sack for them. Understand they have been warned as much by His Alps, the *Eagle's* absent but distinguished owner. C.

Apl. 24.

Passed Miss Thorpe on the street to-day. She bowed, but—gee! I felt as though I'd got into a strong draft. Not blaming you. She and her family have troubles enough just now to explain the icy. C.

May 4.

Suppose you are called as a witness for Thorpe. I am. C.

Monday.

Case opened to-day. Looks as though it would take three or four days to agree on a jury. Gov. Field is challenging every man who says he reads the *Eagle*. Nice ad for us! The talk in the corridors is that he's making a mistake, that this shows how weak he thinks his case is. C.

Friday.

Suppose you're waiting to come over at the last minute. Dist. Att. opened this morning. His address to the jury shows he intends to attack the defendant's case at its most vulnerable point. "Are we, reasonable people, governed by civilized customs inherited from ages of ancestors—are we, enlightened human beings—to turn back now to the past and put our seal of approval on a practice of the ages of barbarism? Are we to countenance the duello, to legitimize murder?" That was the drift of his talk. Bosh—but dangerous for Thorpe. C.

Monday.

Dist. Att. surprised everybody this noon by announcing that his evidence was all in. Gov. Field seemed to be taken by surprise. He moved for the discharge of Thorpe. Denied. Then he asked the court to put over the case

until next Monday. Dist. Att. argued vehemently against it. Judge finally ruled that defense must open Thursday morning. Are you coming? If you haven't got Kenney yet, it's too late. C.

Ashley received this Tuesday morning. In a last desperate essay to find Kenney, he had secured a leave of absence from the *Moon*. From seven in the morning, until after midnight Sunday and Monday, he had patrolled the streets, his eyes aching and his head splitting from his scrutiny of every passing person. In that same Tuesday morning mail came a note from Halsey. Cal Bill was to be released from Sing Sing the following Thursday.

"If I only had Kenney now!" exclaimed Ashley. "With that club over him, I could make him do anything."

The thought thrust him out on the street again. This was his last day. This afternoon he must leave for Boston. And he had vowed to himself that Kenney should go with him. His eyes whipping from each passer-by to the next, he crossed to Third Avenue. As he turned uptown, despite the enervating heat of that early spring day, his pace quickened, until it ticked to the fever in his mind. This was his last chance. He felt as though he must cover every street and avenue in New York that day, or lose his own self-respect. At the junction of the two avenues, he turned up Fourth at a pace which, even in New York, attracted attention.

Noon found Ashley walking rapidly through Twenty-third Street. As he neared Madison Avenue, he noticed a crowd surrounding a wrecked automobile. Two chauffeurs were examining the bent running board and the smashed lamp. He pressed through the crowd to get a look at them.

"Express wagon tried to cut in ahead of me," one of them was explaining. "Smashed one of my steering rods. Where can I get a tow near here?"

"There's a garage up on Twenty-ninth, just west of Madison," replied the other. "Say, see here!" Ashley, moving along because neither of the drivers resembled Kenney, found himself accompanied by them as one led the other out of earshot of the crowd. The second chauffeur continued speaking, and his air of secrecy caught Ashley's attention. "I want to put you wise," he said, "if you go up there and want to get any sort of a rake-off, dodge the boss. He's a hog. Do your trick with anybody except the short man with a wart on his face."

"Wart!" A clutch snapped into place in Ashley's mind. He turned and faced the two chauffeurs.

"I'm going right up Madison," he said, as calmly as he could. "I'll send you down a tow, if you want me to."

CHAPTER XXXII.

"James King!" The moment his eyes fell upon the sign, Ashley knew he had come upon Kenney under another alias. He hastened up the cleated runway into the box of an office at the left. As he entered, a man standing at a high desk writing in a small account book looked up. It was Kenney.

"Mr. King?" asked Ashley.

The owner nodded.

Ashley waited for his heart to regain its accustomed beat. "There's a Reo six-cylinder wrecked down at the corner of Madison and Twenty-third. Can you send a tow right down for it?"

"What's the matter with it?" demanded Kenney, closing his account book.

"Smashed steering rod. Going yourself?"

"I can't go out just for a smashed steering rod," demurred Kenney. "Guess somebody else'll have to do." He passed out of the office into the dimly lighted garage.

Ashley sank into a chair by the office door, where he could keep an eye upon him. In a few minutes a ramshackle automobile passed out of the garage, and Mr. Kenney returned to his office.

"Going to wait for your car?" asked Kenney, in passing.

"That isn't my car—Mr. Kenney."

Ashley spoke the name quietly, but distinctly. The back of James King, alias James Kenney, alias James Kelli-

her was toward him, but Ashley saw him pause in his tracks for one revealing instant, then control his surprise, keep on to his desk, and open his account book, as though he had not noted.

"Whose car may it be, then?" demanded Kenney, denying his interest by refusing to look at Ashley.

"The chauffeur will have to tell you that—Mr. James Kelliher."

And now something broke. Mr. King-Kenney-Kelliher was surprised at the digging up of this old name. Mr. King-Kenney-Kelliher forgot, for a time, to play his part. He swung around and stared at his visitor. After a moment his eyes shifted; he began covertly to study Ashley's shoes. Evidently he feared his visitor was a policeman.

Ashley waited.

Kenney forced a laugh. "What's your game—calling me names?" he ventured.

"That's my way of introducing myself. I want a little private talk with you, Mr. Kenney."

"Well, spill it out. But cut out all this Kenney business. My name's King. I told you that once."

Ashley smiled. "Then you deny you're Kenney?" he asked.

"Sure thing. That name doesn't ring any bells in me." Kenney closed his account book with a snap.

Ashley drew his police photograph from his pocket, rose, and handed it to him. "Before you go any further, suppose you take a look at this," he suggested.

Kenney took the picture, glanced at it with well-simulated carelessness, then laughed. "You don't mean to say you take *me* for this crook?" he demanded jocularly.

"Take a look at the back of it."

Kenney turned it over, allowed his eyes to dwell for a time upon the Bertillon measurements and data. "Well, I see he's got a wart on his face," he commented, "but that's as far as I go with this mug. What's Kenney done?"

"He's wanted in Boston on the Newhall case," Ashley quickly flung.

Kenney's right arm twitched. "Oh, that! A man's being tried for it," he parried.

"Ah! Then you've noticed that!" Ashley's look drove.

Kenney moistened his lips, tried to cover his slip. "Well, that's a good one on me—taken for a crook!" He laughed nervously, loudly. Suddenly he stopped, and his eyes fired. "What kind of a bum detective are you," he flared, "to come in here and insult me by saying that I'm a crook like that?" He threw the photograph down angrily on his desk. "Now, get out of here before I throw you out."

"Perhaps after we've had our talk," rejoined Ashley, coolly sitting down.

"That's my answer to you!" Kenney plucked the photograph from his desk, and quickly tore it in two.

Ashley sprang on him, and pulled the pieces from his hands. Then he dropped one elbow on the desk, rested his head on it, and leveled his eyes at Kenney. He was so close that his adversary's breath fanned his face.

"Kenney," he said calmly, slowly, in a voice whose lowered pitch was emphasis, "I've got too many things on you for you to act like a fool. Listen! You bought the cap which Newhall wore the night he died. You bought the pistol with which he was shot. And Bertrand Newhall paid you ten thousand dollars to——'"

"How——" The question started involuntarily from Kenney's lips. Too late he checked his tongue, and struggled with the alarm which made his eyes bulge. His eyes left Ashley's, and roved uncomfortably about the office, as one driven into a corner. He gathered himself together, crossed the office, and closed the door. With his back against it, he faced Ashley, a mere, crumpled-up travesty of his former self. "What—what do you want of me?" he asked throatily, without meeting his eyes.

"I want you to go to Boston with me on the next train—as a witness."

"I didn't know what he wanted the pistols for," whined Kenney.

"You can testify to that."

"I don't want to get mixed up in that case. I didn't——"

"He paid you ten thousand dollars—what for?" interrupted Ashley. "Now, see here, Kenney," he went on, "you can come with me voluntarily, or I'll take you on by force as an accessory before the fact—you can take your choice. All I want you to do is to decide which—*and now*. I've got more up my sleeve—I——"

"I'll go," Kenney agreed hastily.

"That's where you're wise." Ashley put a hand on his shoulder. "Come, brace up now, and we'll make the one o'clock train."

"I've got to get some one to put in charge here," muttered Kenney.

"I'll wait."

"I want to see my wife first."

"Very well, I'll go with you."

"Give me time, can't you?" sulked Kenney. "I've offered to go over without papers—what more can a man do?"

Ashley studied the beaten man, and took account of his chances. He would lose much valuable time preparing to remove him from the State by legal process. The man appeared to be reduced to a pulp of submission. Would it be wise to press his advantage further? If Kenney became obstinate, and refused to go except under arrest—they would be too late for the trial. Would Kenney be likely to decamp, if given a few hours to himself?

"What did you do with that money?" he asked.

"Every bloody cent's tied up here in this garage."

"Very well. I'll come back for you in time to make the five-o'clock train this afternoon—or do you want to meet me at the station?"

"You let me alone, and I'll meet you at the station."

He spoke with a half whine, half snarl. Ashley saw that he was in the irritated state of mind of the criminal who has confessed, willing to do his part in his own way, yet liable to grow sullen if driven. Quickly he made up his mind.

"All right," he agreed. "Then we'll call it ten minutes before five, at the train from the Grand Central." Ashley turned and left the office.

At half-past four that Tuesday afternoon Ashley was at the Grand Central Station. He purchased tickets, and stationed himself by the track on which the five-o'clock limited for Boston was scheduled to leave. Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed. It was ten minutes before five now, and time for Kenney to appear. Ashley held his ground with difficulty against the throng of people sweeping to their trains. Five minutes more passed. He began to make little forays into the careless, jostling crowds, his eyes shooting restlessly this way and that, his throat freed, ready to call out. A few minutes later he stood nervously at the gate. With tickets in hand, he was prepared to seize Kenney and jump aboard.

Click! The train gate closed.

When he looked again, the train had pulled out. Ashley fought his way through the crowd, and checked his suit case. "Now, Mr. Kenney," he muttered, "if I can only lay hands on you, it's the club for yours." He hurried into the subway

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Ex-Governor Field was one of the few chief magistrates of the too hospitable Commonwealth of Massachusetts who managed to escape death by gastronomy. "Governor" Field—as he was still called—escaped less by merit than by circumstance. He had to earn his living. Since the honorable office violated custom by coming to him, instead of waiting to be sought, he was enabled to state what he would sacrifice for the honor conferred. Since before, during, and after his term, he reserved some small portion of his time to himself, he had the satisfaction of becoming, in addition to governor, the leading criminal lawyer in his State. Not but that he was willing, generous, and urbane—he was these and all their synonyms. Governor Field had the reputation of being the most considerate man who ever realized that Massachusetts was inhabited by other people besides himself. He was as considerate when he represented the Commonwealth at Piety Corners'

Strawberry Festival as when he brought cheer to the political mollusks by giving up his option on a second term.

Governor Field had long ago ceased to be governor, but everybody continued to call him that. He was now the most successful criminal lawyer in the State. That was why he had been chosen to take charge of Walter Thorpe's case. And as Thorpe's counsel he faced a task this fresh May morning from which, in spite of all his tact and experience, he shrank.

His gray eyes grew dull, and one hand made havoc of his thin white hair as he gazed at the cards which a clerk had brought into his private office. He was an old family friend of the Thorpes. He knew just what Alice Thorpe had come to ask him. Her brother ought not to be put on the witness stand, yet how could he convince without wounding her?

"Minot, give me two more minutes to think, then ask them to come in," he said, with sudden, nervous decision.

The two women who later entered his private office were certainly not in a condition to receive any rebuffs. Alice Thorpe looked harassed and worn. She drooped. The life was gone from her face and manner. Her eyes alone stored up the last flashes of her spirit; even there, it flickered as a light flutters against a strong draft. And, if Alice Thorpe drooped, her companion wilted. Miss Newhall's eyes glittered feverishly. She had the haggard look of one whose pillow has been a sea of tears.

Governor Field put off the hour of reckoning as long as possible by attending to their comfort. The constrained silence which followed was broken by Alice Thorpe.

"Mother insisted that I should see you, Governor Field," she said. "I told her we ought not to bother you, but she would have got out of bed to come herself if I hadn't."

Governor Field nodded. "I can understand how she must be worrying," he said sympathetically.

Alice Thorpe moved nervously. "Mother says she won't be able to sleep until you agree to put Walter on the witness stand. She thinks he has a right to tell his story. She believes he will be convicted if you don't let him."

The moment had come. Governor Field secured a pencil from his desk, and began to measure the span of his fingers upon it while he reflected. Nothing but his silence and that shifting pencil indicated how deeply he was troubled. "I can't do that, Alice," he said soberly. "That is, I can't without giving up our best chance to secure Walter's acquittal."

Alice Thorpe leaned toward him. "I wish you would trust to my discretion, and tell me the truth," she exclaimed.

"The truth!" The pencil slipped from Governor Field's hands to the floor. He allowed it to remain there.

"Yes, the truth," Alice Thorpe repeated. "It may be as well to keep it from mother, but it is too late to keep it from me. I have read the newspapers, and I know how small the chance is that you will get Walter off. Don't try to deceive me any longer, Governor Field—please don't!"

"Deceive you! My dear child!" he protested.

Alice Thorpe considered him gravely. 'Mother suspects you don't believe Walter's story," she said hesitatingly.

Governor Field stooped to pick up his pencil. As he rose, his gray eyes lingered on her a moment. The harassed, pinched look which had come upon her face seemed to affect him. "I think perhaps I had better tell you, after all," he declared abruptly; "some things may be difficult for you to understand, but then——"

He cleared his throat. "In a trial like this we have to bear in mind not so much the truth as the precise effect each piece of evidence will have upon the jury. My colleagues and I all believe absolutely in the truth of your brother's story, but we also agree that it would be likely to appear incredible to the jury. Now, just as soon as a panel begins to discredit your chief witness, they lose faith in your whole case, they believe nothing—not a single thing! That's the rock we are trying to avoid. If we had ever so little more evidence in support

of Walter's story, it would be different, we wouldn't hesitate a moment about putting him on the stand."

"What more evidence could there be?"

"Kenney. If we had that one man, the whole aspect of the case would be changed."

"Oh!"

Her cry was so full of surprise and dismay that Governor Field was afraid that she would break down. Quickly he turned the talk another way. "One thing we should be very thankful for," he rushed on, "is the attitude of the newspapers. In a jury case like this, their influence is of paramount importance. You say you have read the newspapers. Then you must have noticed how fair they have been to us—with one exception."

Alice Thorpe freed herself from her reflections. "You mean the *Eagle?*" she inquired.

"Yes, and even that paper was friendly enough at first. Only, in one day, it changed to our worst enemy. I'd give a great deal to know just what caused that sudden shift."

Alice Thorpe stirred uneasily. "I think I may have caused that," she confessed.

"You!" Governor Field regarded her with astonishment.

Frankly, without endeavoring to mitigate her error, she told him of Ashley's connection with the case, and how it had ended.

Governor Field listened intently. "What! This man Ashley realized the importance of Kenney as long ago as that!" he exclaimed. "I wish I had known that sooner. I must have a talk with Ashley at once." He pushed the electric button under his desk. When the office boy entered, his voice became quick, decisive. "I want to talk to a man named Ashley—he's a reporter on the *Eagle*—in a hurry!"

The boy returned immediately. "They say they don't know any such man—never heard of him."

"Did you tell them *I* wanted him?"

"Yes, sir."

"My mistake!" Governor Field dismissed the boy, and reached for his own desk telephone.

"I know his friend Mr. Conley is still there—that is, he was a short time ago," interrupted Alice Thorpe.

"Conley? Good! I'll try for him." But even with Conley, he appeared to labor with difficulties. "You say you haven't anything to tell me about him—does that mean over the phone?—Ah!—Then, just tell me where he lives." Governor Field wrote something on a piece of paper. "Now, if you'll just take a taxi up here at my expense."

Governor Field hung up the receiver. "That's interesting!" he exclaimed. "But you may or may not come. I don't think I shall wait for you, Mr. Conley." He touched his thumb to the button under his desk.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Governor Field handed the slip of paper to the boy who answered. "Get that address for me in New York on the phone," he ordered. "I want a Mr. Ashley. If he's not there, I'll talk to any one who's got a tongue. Let me know when you get it, and I'll take it in the closed booth in the main office. And"—the boy hurrying away stopped at the door—"if a man named Conley calls for me, bring him in instantly. No one else this morning."

The boy gone, Governor Field sank back in his chair. The necessity for quick action had made him forget the presence of the two women. He was still buried in his thoughts, when the door opened.

"Good morning, governor," saluted Conley. "I understand you——" and then he stopped abruptly. His eyes had fallen upon Miss Newhall.

Alice Thorpe bowed to him from across the room. He acknowledged this, and took Governor Field's proffered hand, but covertly he glanced from time to time at Miss Newhall. Evidently her presence made him uneasy.

Governor Field, with other concerns upon his mind, failed to notice; he went straight to the point. "We want to

learn," he said, "if either you or Mr. Ashley know anything about a man named Kenney, who was the chauffeur for the Newhalls up to about eleven months ago."

Conley grinned. "Well, we ought to," he admitted, "seeing that I dug up his record, and that Ashley's been on his track for just about that length of time."

"Can you tell me where that man is now?" inquired Governor Field smilingly.

"No, *I* can't."

"Do you think Mr. Ashley could?"

"I don't know of anybody more likely to be able to," responded Conley promptly. "I haven't heard from him now for over ten days; if that means anything, it means that Ashley's busy running down a clew."

"Was Mr. Ashley sent after Kenney by the *Eagle?*"

"No. He wrote that first article for the *Eagle,* and then he got through. He went over to New York after Kenney on his own hook."

"Yes, I know. But who is paying his expenses?"

"He's paying them himself."

Governor Field frowned. "Do you mean to tell me," he demanded, "that this man Ashley was sufficiently interested in this case to pay his own expenses for eleven months trying to find Kenney?"

"That's what!" declared Conley emphatically, his eyes shifting involuntarily to Alice Thorpe.

She blushed, and seemed about to speak, but Governor Field did not give her time. "Do you think Mr. Ashley, if he knew, would be willing to tell us where Kenney is?" he asked.

"He'd be more likely to tell you than any one else," affirmed Conley, his eyes once again crossing the room.

"Then he's just the man I want to talk to." Governor Field nodded to the boy who had appeared in the doorway, hurried out after him to take his long-distance call on the telephone.

Alice Thorpe crossed the office to Conley. Her manner was humble, and her eyes misty. "Mr. Conley," she said, in a soft voice, "you just said that Mr. Ashley had left the *Eagle* to go in search of this man. Do you mean that he gave up his position to hunt for him?"

Conley shifted uneasily on his feet. "Don't you know what happened?" he asked.

"No."

"No, he didn't leave, though I let the governor think so. As a matter of fact, he was discharged."

"Discharged!" Alice Thorpe's voice trembled. She waited humbly for Conley to explain.

"No, he didn't get a chance to leave," repeated Conley coldly; "he got the sack on account of that first story. That was too favorable to your brother to suit some of the people higher up, so they fired him."

Conley watched the effect of this with mixed feelings. He was delighted to have had a chance to tell her what Ashley had done for her, but the news had cut deeper than he expected. Conley could see that she was much troubled. While he was debating what he could do to soften its effect, Governor Field opened the door and entered. His round, benign, old face wore a look of vexation.

"Mr. Ashley left his boarding house yesterday afternoon, saying he would not be back for a week or ten days," he announced. "No one has any idea where he has gone."

The simple announcement came upon them all with the force of a blow. Led on from hope to hope, they were caught unprepared. The shock made Alice Thorpe realize how much she had suddenly begun to reckon on Ashley's assistance.

"Can't you send a man on to New York to find him?" she urged.

"My dear, there isn't time for that," responded Governor Field. "I need Kenney to-day. This afternoon or to-night at the latest I must plot out our case, plan what evidence we shall bring out, and what we must carefully avoid. Its very form hinges upon my knowing in advance whether I am to have Kenney's testimony or not. Give me him,

and——" He did not finish; a flourish of his hand indicated how much it meant.

"What's the use of giving up with a few hours to spare?" remonstrated Conley. "Leaving that way means one of two things: Either Ashley has at last got on Kenney's trail——"

"Too late!" interjected Governor Field.

"Or Ashley's come back here," continued Conley imperturbably. "For all we know, he may be back in Boston, and Kenney with him."

"Where would he go here?" demanded Governor Field quickly.

"Search me! He might go to his old rooms."

"I suppose there is just a chance of that. We'll take it." Governor Field started to ring.

Conley intercepted his arm. "Wait a minute, governor," he urged. "I'm going to look into that myself. You ought to hear from me inside of ten minutes." He bolted through the door.

The others waited in silence. Nothing mattered much now until they ascertained whether they were to have Kenney's testimony. The two women sat together, their hands clasped. Governor Field got up, and began to pace the office. It was an unwonted tribute on his part to the suspense.

Suddenly the sound of loud voices came to them from the outer office. The door between was thrown open. In the doorway stood Conley; behind him were Ashley and another man. The other man was Kenney.

CHAPTER XXXV.

After the first excitement of their entrance had died down, Ashley drew Conley aside. "Con," he said, "Kenney's likely to sidestep us if he gets the chance. He gave me the slip once, but a yegg named Cal Bill has a score to settle when he finds him, and I used that as a club to get Kenney to come over. Still, one of us ought to keep close to him until his deposition is taken. Would you mind?"

"Sure! This is where he yanks me about with him like a long-lost brother." Conley left the office on the heels of Governor Field and Kenney.

Ashley, turning, learned that Miss Newhall also had disappeared to bear the news to Walter Thorpe and his mother. Thus it came about that for several minutes Alice Thorpe and Ashley were left alone in that little office, in which the tension had relaxed so suddenly. Governor Field, coming back, found them side by side, gazing silently out of a window, as though, somewhere afar without, their looks left the broad thoroughfares to wander down a bypath of their own. As they turned, a charming flush of color rode upon the pallor of Alice Thorpe's cheeks, while Ashley seemed subdued, absorbed.

But Governor Field was too excited to heed. His gray eyes glittered, and his face glowed. "Now," he cried, "I have a fighting chance. All through the trial the district attorney has led the jury to believe that if Kenney could not be found it was because *we* had spirited him away. An insinuation like that is a hard thing to meet with anything except the missing man himself. Now they shall have all the Kenney they want. We shall prove that the collusion lay between Kenney and his master, that Walter Thorpe knew nothing whatever about the purchase of the pistols, that Bertrand Newhall lost his life in a silly attempt to try Walter's nerve, or to shoot Walter himself. There's our only weakness. We have no single well-defined motive. We don't know whether Newhall disguised himself and crept up that dark stairway to test Walter's nerve, or to murder him."

"It goes deeper than that."

Ashley's statement caused Governor Field's brows to pucker under his white hair. He looked at Ashley doubtfully.

Ashley seemed to feel his doubt. "I may be wrong," he said grudgingly. "I can't be sure until I hear Walter Thorpe's story. That will either prove or utterly destroy my theory. Tell me what he says happened that night—and before."

Governor Field considered him gravely for a moment. Then he fixed his eyes on Ashley, and began:

"From the day of his father's death, Walter Thorpe had made a point of avoiding Bertrand Newhall. His mother feared Newhall, and made her son promise to keep away from him. Three days before his death, Newhall suddenly began to call up Walter on the telephone. He said his Wool Trust was in a hopeless condition financially. He wished to consult Walter about its dissolution. But Walter lived up to his promise, and declined; he declined not once, but on three separate occasions during that day and the next.

"Newhall died on Wednesday. On the day before—Tuesday—he made a last plea to Thorpe. He professed not to care about himself, but all his daughter's money was involved in the enterprise. He could understand how Walter might not care to help him, but would he not help him to save something out of the wreck for her? His request was reasonable, it was put very humbly, and it touched Walter Thorpe on his weak spot. He had been engaged to Dorothy Newhall until her father broke it off; they had kept up a secret correspondence all the year she was abroad. The upshot of it was he agreed to meet Newhall and discuss how her interests could be best protected.

"Newhall insisted that this conference should be secret. That was reasonable, in view of the condition of his affairs. At seven-thirty on the night of Newhall's death, Walter took a train to Ashland. Newhall met him at the station with his automobile. On the way to Boston, Newhall took Walter entirely into his confidence. The Wool Trust was irretrievably bankrupt. He expected to be arrested at any minute for misuse of the funds of his bank. He seemed to be crushed, broken, to care only to save what he could from the wreck for his daughter.

"Between eight-thirty and nine that night, the car drew up to the curb around the corner, and they stole into Newhall's house on Commonwealth Avenue to finish the conference. It was agreed that Newhall should execute a voluntary assignment of the Wool Trust to Walter before its creditors should select another assignee not so likely to protect his own and his daughter's interests. That agreed upon, Newhall asked Walter to remain in the empty house while he went to assure himself of the support of the Wool Trust's largest creditor. He had an appointment with this creditor at nine o'clock that night. He would return within an hour, and then they could hunt up a lawyer and execute the necessary papers at once."

"Did you find that Newhall really had any such appointment for that night?" interrupted Ashley eagerly.

Governor Field shook his head. "No, the creditor he named denies having had any. That's one of the very points which the district attorney intends to use to shake Walter's story. But I don't mind, now that we've got Kenney to testify to some more important details."

Governor Field brushed back a white lock of hair which invaded his brow. "They had talked this over in the sewing room where the light—the only one in the house—would be least likely to be noticed from the street. Walter promised to wait until Newhall could see this creditor. Newhall started for the staircase. Halfway there, he stopped and came back. 'Much obliged,' he said, 'but I guess I can't go, after all.'

"'Can't go—why not?' asked Walter.

"Newhall stated that, as he was leaving Mossett that afternoon, his daughter had thrown a green bag containing all her jewelry into the automobile, had insisted that he should take it with him to use as he saw fit. He had objected, but found it useless to argue with her. So he had carried that bag about with him all day. Once or twice, he had noticed that his chauffeur eyed the bag, that he was keeping track of it.

"'Well, I shouldn't let that worry me,' said Walter.

"'I shouldn't,' answered Newhall, 'only I learned yesterday that my chauffeur was a thief. That jewelry may be all Dorothy has left in the world. If I take it with me, I may be arrested with it on my person; and, if I leave it here, that thief who has kept his eyes on it

may sneak back and make away with it. I have discharged him. He leaves my service after to-night. But he may have keys. I don't see how I can go unless you will take my pistol and stay here with it.'"

"Did Miss Newhall really give her father that green bag?" interrupted Ashley.

"No, that's another hole in the story." Governor Field sighed, and went on: "Newhall seemed reluctant to leave the bag even in Walter's custody. 'It's all she's got left, and I know that chauffeur's a dangerous man,' he kept repeating. "How do I know but he'll come back, find you alone, and get away with it?' he asked.

"The green bag lay on a table in the sewing room. At last Walter prevailed upon him to go. He handed Walter his pistol, warned him not to hesitate to use it, and started off.

"Walter heard him hasten down the stairs, heard him open, close, and relock the front door after him. It would be half an hour at least, and probably an hour, before Newhall could get back. There was not a sound in the closed house, not so much as a tick of a clock, and he admits that his nerves were a little on edge from what Newhall had told him.

"Ten minutes went by. Suddenly he thought he heard a key slipped into the lock of the outer door. An instant later he was sure he heard some one creeping up the dark stairs. He sprang to the door of the sewing room. On the landing of the stairway crouched a man, a chauffeur's cap pulled down over his eyes. Walter called to him to throw up his hands. The man raised a pistol and fired. Walter heard the shot sing over his head. He fired, too. The man fell to the floor of the landing. Walter ran to him, lifted his body—and found that he had shot not the chauffeur, but Bertrand Newhall."

For a moment after he had finished, a sinister silence prevailed. Shortly, it was broken by the choked sobs of a woman. Governor Field crossed the office, and patted Alice Thorpe's shoulder.

"There, there!" he comforted her. "I ought not to have told him this before you."

Ashley came and stood at her other side. "It is my fault," he murmured.

Alice Thorpe looked at him, smiled through her tears. "I won't cry any more, if you'll only go on, and let me stay," she said.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

At Alice Thorpe's entreaty, Governor Field finally continued: "I don't think I need to tell you what a shock that was to Walter Thorpe. He says that all he felt at first was that he was a murderer, that he must get away somewhere, and think over what had happened. He ran down the stairs, tore his hand fumbling in the dark to open the front door, finally found the right knob, and escaped. It's a strange thing in life how the good mixes in with the bad. Later on, that accident to his right hand probably saved him from taking his own life.

"For a long time he hurried about the streets, but he could not seem to find a way out of the city or move quickly enough. He felt that if he could only move fast enough he might get away from his thoughts. Somewhere that night he came upon an automobile. He tried to tell the chauffeur to drive fast—anywhere! And then he realized that the shock had done something strange to him, that he could not speak a word which anybody could understand.

"Some time, somehow, that night, he found himself upon the road to Mossett. He had been over it many times, and knew it well. But every step he took along that twenty-five miles made his situation seem worse to him. He felt that no one would believe that he had shot Bertrand Newhall by mistake. He could not bear to tell his mother; he wanted to get away from everybody, and most of all from Miss Newhall. When he saw her coming toward the cottage where he was hiding, and realized that he could not speak a word in his defense, it was too much." Governor Field paused to wipe his face. He took a long time to do it. "I think you know the rest," he said finally.

Somewhere in that office a clock ticked off minutes into eternity. That was the only sound. At last Governor Field, wearied of listening to it, roused himself, and leveled his eyes on Ashley. "Now tell me what you meant," he commanded. "Surely you do not think it was a duel."

"Duel!" Ashley slowly shook his head. "No. Newhall lost his life in no duel. He may have hoped people would believe that, if they refused to think that he was murdered, but—neither of these things happened."

Governor Field nodded. "What happened, then?" he demanded.

"Why, I should say that Bertrand Newhall committed suicide," replied Ashley calmly.

Governor Field regarded him with disapproval. "That theory was exploded months ago," he exclaimed. "Evidently you have not been following the case in court. All the lawyers beneath the sun, moon, and stars couldn't convince a jury that Newhall was not shot by a pistol in the hands of Walter Thorpe."

"Just so—he was," admitted Ashley imperturbably.

"Then how——" Governor Field lost his voice trying to bring together ideas so widely at variance.

"If a man throws himself in front of a moving car, is the conductor a murderer? Is he conducting a duel with the motorman? No. He is simply using them as agents to take his own life. He has committed suicide. No court in the land would hold these men guilty." Ashley's eyes snapped, he spoke with the feeling of an eager young attorney defending a prisoner at the bar. "Suppose Bertrand Newhall planned just when and how that shot should be fired—suppose he used Walter Thorpe precisely as he would a pistol in his own hand!"

The theory seemed to paralyze his two auditors. Alice Thorpe stared at him with widening eyes and trembling lips. Governor Field involuntarily gripped the arms of his chair. "You mean?" he managed to ask.

"I mean that Newhall entered his house that night with a carefully planned scheme to make Walter Thorpe shoot him."

Alice Thorpe drew a quick breath, did not appear to breathe again. Governor Field sat up, considered. "That would explain a lot," he mused, "if we could only prove it." He fell hopelessly back in his chair.

"It is the one thing which explains two of Newhall's actions, and these two actions prove his purpose absolutely."

Governor Field considered him judicially. "And these two actions were?"

"Why should he have paid Kenney *ten thousand dollars* to go away and stay away?"

"Yes—the other? The other?" demanded Governor Field, with sudden eagerness.

"How could he have told Felix Ischenberg one day ahead that he expected Thorpe to shoot him?"

"Did he do that?"

"Yes; Miss Newhall and I can both testify to that. And there's more—and everything points the same way. Why did he put Walter Thorpe on guard over the green bag, which contained only odds and ends? Why did he get him all worked up about his chauffeur? Why did he give Walter Thorpe that pistol? Why did he come back secretly, and so soon? And why—why did he come back wearing that chauffeur's cap? We have Kenney now. Kenney was his paid agent, though he never guessed what was up. Do you know what he will testify? He will testify that for every movement of Newhall's car that day, he received his orders the day before. He will prove that Newhall's story about him and the jewelry was made out of the whole cloth, that he had orders to drive to Westborough and abandon the machine as soon as Newhall and Walter entered the house. He was paid *ten thousand dollars* to do the few things he did and ask no questions. Why?"

Governor Field had risen. He was palpably trying to keep rein of his feelings. "The motive?" he insisted.

"Ah! One has only to pare Bertrand Newhall to the core to find that," exclaimed Ashley. "And it fits—like the right key in the right lock!"

"I'm an old man, but I'm not too old to learn," confessed Governor Field.

Ashley looked at him as though he had not heard, as though his own mind were packed too heavily with what it carried to think of anything else. "Bertrand Newhall had two motives for doing what he did, and out of these sprang another. Everybody knows that he was revengeful and reckless—they know that from what"—Ashley hesitated—"from what he did at Mossett—but I think very few realize where his soft spot lay. I didn't. Not until I learned how fond he was of his stepdaughter did I begin to see things clearly."

Ashley paused as though he did not relish what he now must say. "To secure a small piece of land, Bertrand Newhall formed the Wool Trust and ruined one man; to revenge himself on that man's son, he forced his daughter to break her engagement and go abroad, but he had to pay for it all. When Miss Newhall returned from Europe, he had sunk all his own and her money in the Wool Trust, he had wrecked his bank trying to keep his Wool Trust going. And he had accomplished what? Nothing. The Thorpes still owned that land; Walter had redeemed his father's business, and was daily becoming more prosperous, while he himself was ruined, and might be arrested at any moment for misusing the funds of his bank. That must have been a bitter situation for so determined a man to face—one that would make him think deep and hard.

"Bertrand Newhall was a man much more likely to commit suicide than to confess defeat and go to jail. He carried half a million dollars' worth of life insurance. This would provide for his stepdaughter. But it had all been taken out recently; if he committed suicide, the companies would refuse to pay the policies. He must leave her provided for, or she might marry Walter Thorpe. Even if he did this, she might do it after he died. How could he prevent it?

"Well, he thought out a way—a way not only to prevent this, but to provide for his stepdaughter, and to ruin Walter Thorpe in the bargain." Ashley rose, and began to pace the room. "It is hard to believe that any human being should be hard enough, yes, and shrewd enough, to invent a plan by which he could accomplish so many different purposes by one stroke. But there is his record. Think of the sort of man he was, and the situation he faced! What, then, was his plan? It makes me shudder even to think of it. I haven't dared tell it to a soul until I could prove it."

Ashley walked the length of the office and stared out of the window at that end. When he went on, it was in a lower voice, with his back to the others, still staring out of that window. "If Newhall could manage to make some one kill him, his insurance would be paid. If he could make Walter Thorpe do it, Thorpe would be accused of his murder, and would be robbed of any chance of marrying Miss Newhall. It's fiendish! It's almost incredible, but that—that was what Bertrand Newhall planned for, and all but carried out."

He stopped. His story seemed to carry instant conviction to his listeners. And for an instant the shadow of its malignity appeared to settle upon them all. Alice Thorpe lifted her handkerchief to her eyes. Governor Field sat silent, somber-faced, in his chair. Suddenly he rose and dashed out of the room. "Minot!" they heard him call. Then they heard nothing—for the woman and the man, left together, had found each other's arms.

GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER, author of "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford" and other great stories of business and politics, has written another semi-humorous novel. It will appear COMPLETE in the October Month-end POPULAR, on sale two weeks hence, September 25th. The title of the novel is "HE'S A CORKER." Also in that issue you will get the first part of a new serial by RALPH D. PAINE

Sweeney to Sanguinetti to Schultz

By Charles E. Van Loan

Author of "A Pennant and a Penance," "The Ten-Thousand-Dollar Arm," Etc.

The triple alliance in baseball. If anything of a chain-lightning nature was due to happen in the infield it was a certainty that it would be started by the Irishman, pushed along by the Italian, and finished by the German. A trio of energetic ball players and equally energetic trouble makers

SWEENEY to Sanguinetti to Schultz"—thus it used to appear in the box-score summary of the games in which the old Mudhens took part. Sometimes, of course, it was "Sanguinetti to Sweeney to Schultz," which was a mere matter of inconsequential detail, depending upon which side of the bag the ball was hit. If anything of a chain-lightning nature was due to happen in the infield, it was a certainty that it would be started by the Irishman, pushed along by the Italian, and finished by the German. As for the third baseman, he was only a married man, with three children, and a touch of rheumatism in his right knee. He did not count. The real stars of the Mudhen infield were Sweeney, Sanguinetti, and Schultz.

Whether it was the red-headed, fighting mick at short who first got his hands on the ball, or the nervous, temperamental Italian at second, it was always the mountain of a Teuton at first who closed the incident with a sweep of his broad, flat mitt. Sweeney and Sanguinetti were wonders at starting things, but whenever they started something which they could not stop, they yelled for Schultz. That was where Schultz shone. He was a noble finisher, that German first baseman.

This was just as true off the diamond as on, for the three were as closely allied in their hours of busy leisure as when they were working at their trade. That was what caused all the trouble. Sweeney, Sanguinetti, and Schultz were too much together. Too much together for their own good and the good of the club. When they were together they went hunting for trouble—that is to say, Sweeney wished to find trouble, and Sanguinetti told him where to look for it. After they had found it, and amused themselves with it for a while, they turned it over to Schultz. He knew what to do with trouble, that big German.

For three years the trio lasted, skating on the thin edge of suspensions, managerial fines, and police-court proceedings. For three years they whipped policemen, taxi mahouts, waiters, and cab drivers; they demoralized towns and teams; they split the league wide open; and then, just as they had made up their minds to reform, the overstrained hair parted, the sword flashed, and calamity fell upon them as a reward for an act of pure heroism. Pure, unadulterated heroism, mind you. It doesn't seem right, even to this day.

From the beginning of the alliance, Sweeney, Sanguinetti, and Schultz were "in Dutch" with the management of the club. After a time they grew used to it. The worst thing about Johnny Moore, the manager of the team, was that he had absolutely no sense of humor. He could not see any fun in a combination formed of an Irishman, an Italian, and a German. Johnny should not be blamed for that; he was born that way.

Sweeney, of course, was the fountain head of nearly all the devilment which

flowed from the coalition. Sweeney had originality, initiative, and inventiveness. He was a red-headed, square-shouldered, freckle-fisted young man who came from the gas-house district of a great city. He began his career by playing ball upon the crowded streets, and dodging policemen who wanted to arrest him for it. He has been playing ball and dodging policemen ever since. Sweeney was the bright star of the combine, the guiding genius, the trouble boss; a prospector for excitement, an ugly customer in a mixed battle, and a terror to umpires and base runners who slid feet first.

Sanguinetti was born on the East Side in New York, and there was nothing really Italian about him but his name, his dark, soulful eyes, and his artistic temperament. Sanguinetti will resent this statement about his temperament, but it is true, nevertheless. On the field and off, he depended a great deal upon Sweeney's leadership, but Sanguinetti was a flash of lightning when it came to backing up a lead, and carrying a play along to the point where the fists began to fly. There was nothing yellow about Sanguinetti but his teeth, and while he could not invent new ways of getting into trouble or creating a disturbance, he was ever blithe to have them invented for him. He did the best he could, considering his limitations, and what man of us can do more?

And Schultz—well, he was just Herman Schultz, a German. He was born in the old country, a fact which his tongue seemed unable to forget. He came to America at the tender age of seven, but after twenty years he still talked like a fresh importation from the delicatessen belt. It was not his fault; he simply could not help it.

Sweeney used to say that Schultz joined the Irish-Italian Alliance for protection from the women who wished to marry him. The Mudhens were rather extensively wedded, as a team. Sweeney, Sanguinetti, and Schultz were bachelors, and hoped so to remain. But this was just one of Sweeney's jokes. The real truth of the matter was that Schultz fought his way into the alliance, and never was able to fight his way out again.

It happened in St. Louis, where the fans grow peevish toward the end of the season, and skip pop bottles off the heads of the umpires. They do this in some other places, too—New York, for instance. Only in St. Louis, when they throw at an umpire they generally hit him. Ask Bill Evans.

It was during Schultz's first year with the team, and the Mudhens were playing a St. Louis date, with the full strength of the company. The second game of the series was a ding-dong affair, and the Mudhens won, one to nothing.

In the eighth inning there was quite a celebration. It grew out of a decision at second base. Warner, of the St. Louis club, started to steal, and slid to the bag, Sanguinetti handling the throw. About nine thousand people in the stands thought Sanguinetti failed to get the ball on Warner in time. One man on the diamond took the other end of the argument. He was the umpire, and he called Warner out.

The St. Louis players came roaring from the bench, and the fans came roaring from the bleachers. The umpire yelled for the police. It was an unfortunate affair all around, for the next batter spanked out a double, which would have scored Warner from second if—but no post mortems. Warner was out. The umpire said so. St. Louis went home to his wife with his collar wilted down, speaking in whispers, blaspheming hoarsely. It was a close race that year, and every game counted.

That evening Sweeney and Sanguinetti started out to examine into the electric-lighting system of the city.

"Wherever we see plenty of lights," said Sweeney, "we will go in and see what it is all about."

"You said it for me, too, Larry," remarked Sanguinetti.

Along about eleven o'clock the two ball players strolled into a place which they had evidently overlooked in their earlier rounds. The white-aproned gentleman with the curly bang built low upon his forehead was requested to ar-

range a brace of intricate beverages, the construction of which demanded a shaker, plenty of ice, the white of an egg, and—some other trifles.

If Sweeney and Sanguinetti had looked about them, they would have seen Herman Schultz sitting at a table in a far corner, thoughtfully concealing a tall goblet of dark, foreign-looking brew. In like manner, Schultz overlooked his teammates. No German can drink a genuine imported beer and keep an eye out for his friends at the same time.

While Sweeney and Sanguinetti were standing peaceably at the bar, waiting for the artist to produce twin masterpieces, the door opened, and in came seven noisy young men, wearing number six hats and number nineteen collars. One of them, a dish-faced person with an undershot jaw, recognized Sanguinetti. He gathered his clan at the far end of the bar, and spoke in a low tone. Then, with the dish-faced youth in front, the newcomers moved forward in a body.

"Hey! You're that wop second baseman, ain't you?"

Thus the leader saluted Sanguinetti, who turned with his back to the bar, and dropped his right hand to his side. Sweeney took his elbows off the rail, and looked over his shoulder.

"Well," said Sanguinetti pleasantly, "what's it *to* you? What if I am?"

"Oh, nothing," said the dish-faced person. "Nothing. Only you never put the ball on Warner this afternoon. That was a rotten, dirty steal."

Sanguinetti, with one eye on the dish-faced party, estimated the strength of the attacking force. Seven to two—the odds should be shorter. A chorus of growls came from the six young men:

"Naw! He never even come close!"

"Warner slid under the ball."

"This wop couldn't tag an elephant in an alley!"

Sweeney faced about.

"Sa-a-ay!" he remarked. "What's eating you guys? You looking for something?"

That was what Sanguinetti had been waiting for. His leader had spoken. It was to be war, then. Oh, very well.

"You say I didn't tag this bird today," said Sanguinetti softly. "Well, I'll tell you the truth now. I didn't, but I'm going to tag—*you!*"

Fist and word landed at the same time, and down went the dish-faced person in a limp heap, wondering in a dazed fashion what had happened to him.

It was a lively little party while it lasted. Sweeney did the best that was in him, landing his leathery fists with tremendous execution, and Sanguinetti began to pump rights and lefts into every strange face in sight. Sanguinetti did not last long. The dish-faced person on the floor, recovering consciousness, identified Sanguinetti's legs, and attached himself to them with such fervor that the second baseman pitched headfirst to the sawdust. That made it bad—very bad—and it might have been worse but for the fact that the attacking party was suddenly split into two sections by a gigantic young man, who bellowed like a bull.

"Gif it to 'um, Sweeney!" he yelled. "Knock 'um owit!"

It was Schultz to the rescue, and just in the nick of time. He planted a terrific kick in the midsection of the dish-faced person, who was trying to get his thumb into Sanguinetti's eye, and as the second baseman jumped to his feet, Schultz knocked one of the hoodlums headfirst across the free-lunch table, and with another powerful blow dropped a second one kicking and clucking to the floor.

There wasn't very much to the battle after that. Three of the seven were able to run, and they ran, taking one of the swinging doors with them. The others were on the floor. Two of them could crawl, and they crawled for the sidewalk.

"The bulls!" panted Sweeney. "Let's beat it!"

"Hey!" shouted the bartender. "Ain't you going to pay for these drinks?"

Even as that question hung quivering in the air, the ball players vanished through a side door. When the "bulls" finally arrived on the scene of battle,

they found nothing but one very sick young man on the floor. He said he did not know what had happened to him, but inclined to the belief that some one must have murdered him when his head was turned. Later the ambulance surgeon located three broken ribs—one for Sweeney, one for Sanguinetti, and one for Schultz. Of course the bartender didn't know a thing about it, not a thing. Never saw *any* of 'em before—hoped he would never see any of 'em again.

That was the way Schultz fought himself into the alliance. Is it any wonder that Sweeney and Sanguinetti received him with open arms?

Johnny Moore stood for a great many queer things in the course of three seasons, for there wasn't a better infield in the whole country, but at last his few remaining grains of patience were exhausted. The International Triplets were getting upon his nerves.

"Now, listen here!" he said. "I'm going to announce myself. It's all very well for you to be three little pals together, and take a drink once in a while, but this business of raising hell from April till October has got to stop. You hear me? It's—got—to—stop! That last jam you got in down to Coney Island was the extreme tip of the limit. The next time I hear of you birds going on a bat—the very next time, mind you—down comes the ax! And it won't be a fine or a suspension, either. You can paste that in your little brown hats. I'll bust up this combination, that's what I'll do, and I'll bust it three ways from the liver! You ain't going to make me the goat any more, and have everybody saying that I run a rowdy ball club. You start anything now, and I'll set you plum' outside!"

"The chief is peeved," said Sanguinetti to Sweeney. "Who do you suppose put him next to that little run-in down at Coney?"

"Aw, some trouble detective," said Sweeney wearily. "I thought we had those fellows squared. Say, Nettie, the old man means business this time. Let's cut out the rough stuff for a while. We'll be getting ourselves disliked if we don't. Me for the water wagon."

"You said it for me, Larry," announced Sanguinetti. "Water wagon she is."

Schultz would not climb on with his friends. He said there was no sense in it, as he drank nothing but beer, anyway, and very little of that. But he warmly applauded the idea of his friends making a trial trip. Schultz was black and blue from the neck to the heels as a result of the last mess of trouble which Sweeney had found for him, and he welcomed signs of reform. Schultz was not quarrelsome by nature; he was always saddest when down on the floor with three or four perfect strangers. There never was a German who did not agree with Uncle Billy Sherman about the war business.

So the International Alliance devoted itself assiduously to auction pinochle and "race-horse pitch," went early to bed, and drank nothing but water, Schultz having been persuaded against his better judgment. Johnny Moore could hardly believe his senses.

Fate decreed that the blow which was to fall upon the alliance should fall in St. Louis, the place of its origin. It came about through Sanguinetti's fatal fondness for the theater. The second baseman was passionately devoted to the sock, the buskin, and the pink fleshings. Anything, so long as it was a "show" of some sort. As for Sweeney, he demanded girls and music, but principally girls. Musical comedy was his pet attraction. Schultz had no love for the drama in any form, and musical comedies made him very tired, but he had formed the habit of traveling with the others, so he took his medicine uncomplainingly, like the good fellow he was.

When the Mudhens arrived in St. Louis upon the trip selected by destiny, Sanguinetti, scanning the morning papers, announced that a new musical comedy was being produced at a house where his "face was good."

"We'll go around and look 'em over," said Sanguinetti.

"You and me both," said Sweeney.

Schultz groaned, but said nothing.

That evening Sanguinetti presented

himself at the ticket window, and shook hands with the treasurer of the house.

"H'are you, boy?" said the treasurer. "Want to see the show?"

"Sure!"

"Well, the best I can do for you is an upper stage box. It's the one we set apart for members of the profession. It isn't likely I'll have to put any one in there with you. You're actors, all right, at that—bad actors."

"No," said Sweeney. "We've reformed. Didn't you hear about us? It'll be five weeks to-morrow since we got on the cart."

"Good news, says Mrs. Hughes!" remarked the treasurer.

He scribbled a few hieroglyphics upon the back of an envelope, and passed three coupons through the window, and Sweeney, Sanguinetti, and Schultz, led by the finger of fate, disappeared through the lobby. If their seats had been anywhere else in the house, anywhere but in that upper-stage box—but, as we said before, no post mortems. Life is made up of the trivial things, the petty decisions, the trifling details which make or mar the future. And we never know until afterward, and then it is too late.

Having guided the three ball players to their seats, the machinery of destiny began to revolve rapidly.

While the first act was in progress, Schultz, half asleep in the back of the box, was amazed to see a young lady enter, look about her disdainfully, sniff a few times, and take a seat as far away from him as possible. She was all of five years old.

"Hey! Look who's here!" said Schultz.

Sweeney and Sanguinetti were surprised, too. Sanguinetti thought the young lady might be lost. He asked her about it. She regarded him with scorn.

"Lost?" said the little lady. "Well, I sh'd say not! I sing with my mamma in the third act. It's the hit of the piece!"

"Oh!" said Sweeney. "Is mamma an actress?"

"She's the principal boy with this show," announced the little stranger. "Wait till you see her. She's got all the rest of these troupers beat to death!"

"I'm going to duck," announced Schultz suddenly. "She sings up hier in dis box, unt ve git a bawl-owit!"

"Stick around!" said Sweeney. "It won't come off until the last act."

Schultz collapsed, mumbling, and the young lady smoothed her fluffy skirts, and sniffed contemptuously.

Destiny, in order to play out the hand, was using the press agent of the house. A press agent is a young man whose business it is to get the name of his show into print as often as possible, no matter what the city editors think about him.

This press agent, whose name was Harley Q. Walker, was a live wire. He was the livest wire in St. Louis. He kept in touch with the doings of his professional brethren in the East, and when a new press-agent stunt appeared on Broadway, Harley Q. annexed it for St. Louis. Consequently, when a baby elephant walked down the aisle of a New York theater, and handed a bouquet over the footlights to the leading lady, Walker knew about it. Great idea! Bully stuff! But baby elephants are scarce, and none was to be found in St. Louis. What to do now? Harley Q. slapped his broad, high forehead, and reflected deeply. Aha! There was a troupe of performing baboons appearing at a summer garden in the city. Mr. Walker was saved.

It took some time to make the arrangements. The man who trained the baboons demanded money. It was pointed out to him that he would secure a great deal of advertising, which was better than money. After some talk, he capitulated. Then the baboons had to be trained to march down the aisle, carrying bouquets. There were eight of them, and they were particularly homely brutes, but, like most unhandsome people, they were sagacious.

They took to the bouquet-carrying act like Forty-second Street Johnnies. Excellent! Mr. Harley Q. Walker was pleased with himself, the management was pleased with him, and the newspaper men would be on hand to watch the

parade of the flowering baboons. Mr. Walker calculated that it should be worth a column and pictures to every paper in town.

We now have thirteen characters in the cast—Sweeney, Sanguinetti Schultz, the little lady in the box, the press agent, and the eight baboons. Destiny sent the fourteenth actor in the drama lurching through the doors shortly after the opening of the second act. The fourteenth actor was fat, red in the face, and of fitful, troubled ideas. His name makes no difference at all, though he told the police afterward that it was John Smith.

An usher looked at John Smith doubtfully as he seated him in the very last row upon an aisle.

"Keep your eyes on that souse," he warned his companion.

John Smith oozed into his seat. He found the music soothing, and, with a series of nervous jerks and quivers, fell asleep, and dreamed of strange animals.

In the upper stage box, Sanguinetti and Sweeney leaned out over the rail, trying to flirt with the third one from the end. Schultz slumbered fitfully, for he was tired, having played pinochle on the train the night before. The scornful little lady counted the house and sniffed.

Out in the lobby, Mr. Walker and the trainer marshaled the eight flower-bearing baboons.

"The house is dark for the next song," said the press agent, "and that's the time we'd better herd the monks into their positions. She lights up right after the moon song for the finale of the act. Now let's see—four monks to one aisle, and four to the other, and you're to send 'em down with the flowers after the third curtain call. The newspaper men are all in front."

"Did you give 'em my picture?" asked the trainer anxiously.

"Surest thing you know!" lied Harley Q. glibly. "They'll probably want to interview you afterward." They did, too.

"All right," said the trainer. "All set? Hup! You Battling Nelson! Quit that!"

"Battling Nelson," a blond baboon with a blue face and pink whiskers, showed his teeth in a deprecatory smile, and the procession began to move.

The lights were low when the flower bearers entered the auditorium. The stage was deserted, save for a very big woman with a very little voice, who was singing a song to a greenish property moon. The house was absolutely quiet, save for the vocal struggles of the large lady upon the stage.

At that very moment, John Smith, dreaming of pink lizards and purple mice, awoke with a snort and a gurgle. He jerked his head about to make sure of his surroundings, and, in the shadowy gloom of the place, his astounded eyes rested upon a solemn procession of dog-faced apes, with bouquets in their hands. The baboons were passing along the runway behind the last row of seats, and they were so close that John Smith might have touched them.

Now, every one knows that when a man is accustomed to pink lizards and purple mice, baboons with roses in their hands are a terrible shock to his nervous system.

John Smith leaped to his feet, with a hoarse howl of terror, and even as he yelled, he launched a tremendous kick at the baboon nearest to him.

Then everything happened at once.

You can kick a baboon if you see him first, but you cannot make him like it. A baboon is sensitive. He doesn't look it, but you never can tell from the color of a baboon's face what his disposition may be.

Two baboons and three ushers hurled themselves upon John Smith, who began to fight like a maniac, screaming at the top of his voice. Those in the back of the house had jumped to their feet with the first yell; now Smith's cries were mixed with the chattering and barking of the eight baboons.

Down in front a woman began to scream hysterically. It was her voice which stampeded the six baboons who had, up to that point, taken no part in the battle. One of the brutes sprang upon the railing, and started for the footlights over the heads of the people, and, as he went, he used his sheaf of

American Beauties as a club. The other baboons followed him, shrieking and chattering like crazy things. One baboon would have been enough to create a disturbance; eight of them complicated the situation somewhat.

A panic resulted. Men and women were swept out of their seats, and carried in a wave toward the front of the house. The aisles were full of struggling, screaming human beings, and behind them came the baboons, like hairy furies.

From their seats in the upper box, Sanguinetti and Sweeney could not see what was causing the excitement. They saw only the panic swirling down the aisles toward the orchestra pit.

"Hell's loose in the back of the house!" shouted Sweeney, above the clamor. "Let's jump down on the stage and beat it out of the back door!"

"You said it for me!" yelled Sanguinetti excitedly.

Just then the scornful little lady called attention to her presence, with a succession of piercing screams.

"Mamma! Mamma!" she wailed.

"We can't leave this poor kid here," said Sweeney. "Got to take her along somehow."

He picked the child up in his arms, and she clung to him, still screaming with fright.

"It's all right now," said Sweeney. "It's all right. Cheese on the noise, little one. We'll get you to your mamma. *Herman!*"

"Vot iss?" demanded the big German.

"Herman, you jump down on the stage. Sanguinetti, you drop into the box below here. I'll pass the kid along to you, and you toss her to Schultz! I'll follow. Quick, now!"

It was the commanding officer speaking, and, like trained soldiers, Schultz and Sanguinetti obeyed. By this time the uproar in the back of the house had begun to subside, but the sight of two men leaping from an upper stage box did not tend to restore public confidence. One of the men jumped on the stage. A third man appeared in an upper box with a child in his arms.

"Now then!" he yelled. "Sweeney to Sanguinetti to Schultz! All set?"

Sanguinetti braced himself against the rail below.

"Shoot her along!" he cried.

Sweeney leaned far out over the roaring abyss, with the squirming, screaming child balanced in his muscular hands. A shout of protest went up from the mass of humanity jammed into the aisles. Sweeney gauged distance and drop with a practiced eye, and the yell of warning changed to a gasp as the little white bundle flashed downward. Sanguinetti caught the child deftly about the tiny waist, and, with one swing of his powerful shoulders, sent her flying over the footlights to Schultz.

And that put the finishing touch to the panic, for it showed the crowd a way out of the place.

In less than ten seconds the stage was black with scurrying people, and when the curtain came down hundreds tried to fight their way through it.

Sweeney, Sanguinetti, and Schultz trotted down an alley, chuckling to themselves.

"And nobody but us could have done it so slick," said Sweeney. "I wonder how you'd score that play?"

They found out in the morning.

You might think that an affair of that sort would give a press agent pause, so to speak.

Nothing of the kind.

Harley Q. Walker needed an alibi badly, also a scapegoat, and fate sent him three of the best little scapegoats that ever went bleating into the wilderness. In some subtle way, known only to press agents and diplomats, he contrived to cast most of the blame for the entire affair upon the battle-scarred shoulders of Sweeney, Sanguinetti, and Schultz.

Y-e-e-s, he admitted that there had been a trifling disturbance in the back of the house, but that was nothing. It would have blown over in a minute, and the people would have gone back to their seats but for the melodramatic

horseplay introduced by three rowdy ball players, who belonged to a visiting team.

"They're bad fellows," explained Walker to the newspaper men. "They're always getting soused, and creating a row. Look up their records if you don't believe me. Why, they might have killed that poor little kid, throwing her around like that. Her mother is going to sue for heavy damages—shock to the kid's nervous system, and all that sort of thing. And there wasn't any *excuse*. Hand it to 'em good and plenty!"

Johnny Moore read all the papers every morning in bed.

This was one of the front-page headlines which greeted him:

ROWDY BALL PLAYERS CREATE PANIC IN THEATER!

This was another:

SWEENEY, SANGUINETTI, AND SCHULTZ AGAIN ON RAMPAGE!

And this was the way one of the articles began:

Not content with their rowdy conduct on the diamond, three ball players named Sanguinetti, Schultz, and Sweeney last night broke up a performance of "The Gilded Lily" and endangered hundreds of precious lives. As a result several suits for heavy damages may be filed.

Reputation can be a fearsome thing at times.

Before Sweeney, Sanguinetti, and Schultz rolled out of their beds in the morning, the fate of the International Alliance was sealed. They rolled out when Johnny Moore sent for them, and they went up on the managerial carpet with clear consciences. They had not seen the morning papers, but Johnny shook them at the culprits as they entered.

When the manager got through frothing at the mouth, the defendants began to talk, all at the same time.

"A-h-h-h, shut up!" snapped the manager. "Think you can play me for a sucker all the time? This is where I've got you with the goods! I'm going to split this combination so far apart that no two of you will ever be together again! That's what I'm going to do! I wish they had a baseball league in China!"

Considering the limitations of organized baseball, Moore did fairly well. Sweeney went to Boston, Sanguinetti went to Chicago, and poor old Schultz remained with the Mudhens. Moore said that Schultz would have been all right but for Sweeney and Sanguinetti.

And all, mind you, for an act of pure heroism.

It doesn't seem right, even to this day.

A BLOW TO HIS VANITY

WILLIAM HOSTER, one of William Randolph Hearst's right-hand men, is not quite as bald as he can be, but, at that, he is not displaying what might be called a "mop of hair." And to what is left of a once superb and splendid suit of dark-brown hair, Hoster each morning devotes much affectionate care and painstaking devotion. No luxuriant locks were ever combed by My Lady Fair with greater skill than is lavished by Hoster on those few strands which have withstood the disastrous enfilade of time. Each particular hair has its station.

One day Hoster was playing with a little girl. To be exact, her age was seven—the time of curiosity and utter frankness. Suddenly she paused in her chatter, and gazed with wide eyes at Hoster's head.

"Oh!" she said, in awe-struck tone. "Mr. Hoster, what is those black strings on your head?"

Rose of Caribou

By Hulbert Footner

Author of "Not to the Swiftest," "Bosom Adversaries," Etc.

The coming of Old Pete's daughter to Caribou Lake brings a group of very earnest wooers—but it isn't every fellow who can fall in love and land on his feet

JIM WATTLES forded Musquasepi just below where it comes flowing softly out of Caribou Lake, keeping his legs dry by the simple expedient of crossing them on his horse's neck. One strange to him might not have guessed it, but Jim had taken special pains with his appearance upon this journey. It is no light undertaking for a man to cut his own hair. Moreover, he had exchanged moccasins for "outside" boots, and he felt very uncomfortable and virtuous.

He put up his horse in Pete Greenfield's stable, and strode into the shack. Old Pete stood in the center of the one and only room, rubbing his gray, stubbly chin with a distracted air. The place looked as if a whirlwind had blown in the door, made a circuit or two of the room, and then swept out. The principal components of the resulting débris were torn bedding, ragged, cast-off clothes, and old newspapers.

"I'm cleaning up," said Pete. He was very old, and he had the wistful, gentle air that often goes with great age. His clothes looked as old and as faded as he did, and the trousers tucked in the tops of his high moccasins, together with the little cap cocked jauntily askew, gave him somewhat the aspect of an aged, mischievous schoolboy.

"It needs it," said Jim dryly. Jim was solid and slow, and looked serious-minded. "Here," he gruffly added, shoving a bundle toward Pete, "I brung you a link robe, Pete."

"Now, that's neighborly," said the old man. "It'll make the shack look real dressy like." He went about picking up armfuls of stuff, and laying it down in fresh places. "Ain't been teched in five years," he said plaintively. "What'll I do with the stuff?"

"Burn it," said Jim.

"What, all my newspapies!" cried the old man, aghast. "I never git any new ones up here."

"Better look sharp," said Jim. "Mail's had good weather this trip, and the water's high. Boat'll be along directly."

Old Pete forthwith began pitching the stuff out of doors. "That's so! that's so!" he cried agitatedly. "Think of havin' a young female on the place, Jim! I'm plumb upset about it!"

"Ain't spoke to a white woman myself in six years," said Jim nervously, "and she wa'n't no girl like. What kind of a handle do you give her, Pete? I s'pose she's too old for just 'sis.'"

"Her name is Rose," said the old man. "But you'll have to call her Miss Greenfield. She'll expect it."

"Oh, Lor'!" groaned Jim.

"Kin you scrub a floor, Jim?" asked Pete anxiously.

"Sure!"

"Well, get to it, man. My joints is too stiff."

While Jim applied himself to the floor with more energy than thoroughness, old Pete carried the rest of the stuff outside, and touched a match to the pile. He stood in the doorway, watching it burn.

"Pete," said Jim suddenly from the floor, "I think I struck something this time. I staked out claims for you and

her, too. Soon as a railroad comes through we'll all be rich."

"If we ain't dead first," said Pete amiably.

"It ain't much of a life, this baching alone," added Jim inconsequentially.

"Not much," assented Pete cheerfully.

"You had a wife," Jim went on, "but I never had no chance at one. Ever since I was a lad, I been pitching around, and I never took very kind to the brown girls, as you know. Since my dog died, I ain't had nothin', Pete. Would you mind if I come a-courtin' your daughter, Pete?"

"You're near fifty year old, Jim."

"I ain't an old man yet," said Jim, frowning, "not by a good deal! And I'd treat her awful kind, Pete."

"Ast her yourself, Jim," said old Pete, with a shrug. "I ain't a-goin' to interfere."

Jim attacked the floor with renewed zest. "That's all I expected of you, Pete," he said. "But I knew all the fellows on the lake would be after her, and I didn't want to lose no time."

"Hadn't you better wait till you set eyes on her?" asked Pete dryly.

"She ain't got no rivals in the country," said Jim.

As they worked there came the sound of a great rattling and shouting from the direction of the stable.

"That'll be Bud Gummy," said Jim coolly. "Bud makes more noise a-drivin' of his team than a spring freshet in the hills."

A large, flabby man, about the age of Jim, but red-haired, red-faced, and with a boastful eye, came around the house. His face fell at the sight of Jim.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded.

"Same to you," said Jim, sloshing a bucket of water over the doorsill.

Bud nimbly avoided its course. "If I want to spell with my old friend, Pete Greenfield, what have you got to say against it?"

"Nothin'," said Jim. "You're doin' the talkin'."

"Gimme a hand out with the stove, Bud, so he kin wash under it," said Pete. As they set it down outside he added anxiously: "That's a bum-lookin' stove, ain't it? How kin I spruce it up for her to cook on?"

"Grease it," suggested Bud.

"I'm afraid 'twould raise a stink when the fire was lighted again," said Pete dubiously.

Bud pulled old Pete out of the line of sight through the doorway. "Look here, Pete," he said affably, "I brung you a sheath knife. It's an awful good one!"

"Much obliged, Bud, much obliged!" said the old man, a little dazed by his access of popularity.

"I like to give," said Bud. "I'm an open-handed feller, I am."

Pete waited to see if there was any more coming.

There was. "When I was out last fall I seen your daughter at the mission," continued Bud. "She's a good looker, all right."

Pete wagged his head, much gratified. "Did you speak to her, Bud?" he asked.

"No, I on'y looked at her. Well, the long and the short of it is, I've decided to marry her, Pete—that is, if you're willin'."

Pete rubbed his chin in great perplexity. "There ain't no rush about it, Bud," he said.

"Sure there is! Look at that son of a gun inside there, and there'll be more comin' round before mornin'. Why, there ain't never been a white girl in this part of the country!"

"Well, Bud, let's wait, and see what she says."

"She's your daughter, ain't she?"

"Yes, but her idees about a husband have got to be considered, too. Let the best man win, I say."

"That's all I wanted, Pete," said Bud complacently. "You kin leave the rest to me."

They returned to the house.

"Bud, fetch a couple of armfuls of hay for her bed," said Pete.

Bud hastened for it. When he returned, he asked: "Where you goin' to sleep, Pete?"

"In the stable with the hosses," said

the old man. "Till I kin build me an addition."

"I'll help you up with the walls," said Jim.

"I'll freight all your nails and window frames and such like at half rates," said Bud. "Fer nothin' at all," he hastily added, seeing Jim smile.

"Much obliged. Much obliged, boys," said Pete.

They finished redding up the shack, they supped, and the sun went down; still there was no sign of the mailman's boat in the river. After supper they sat around the shack on the boxes that constituted Pete's chairs, smoking, all three, Jim whittling stolidly, Bud glowering sidewise at Jim, and old Pete prattling along in the way he had got into from much living alone, whether or no any one was listening.

"I mind one September I took a little prospectin' trip up to the Raspberry Hills," said Pete. "And I had a pound of butter that a freighter gimme, real cow butter. I set an awful sight o' store by that aire butter, boys. It were the first I tasted in a year back. I used to put it in a tin bucket, and sink the bucket in the brook, to keep it cold.

"Well, one day I were a-comin' back to camp real soft life, when I see a big, brown, hairy back turned toward me. It were a bear, and he were so busy he didn't hear me comin'. Right away I thought about my butter, and I were mad as hell. Yes, sir, he were just a-leanin' over to fish out that bucket. Well, I had brung up a bundle of barrel staves to make me a rocker, and one of them lay handy to my hand. He offered me a fair mark, and I hit him a crack. *Woof!* he jumped up and clapped his hand to the spot, and looked over his shoulder at me, just like a human boy. Then he run. Say, I near died laughin'!"

Pete's monologue was interrupted by a distant hail. Bud Gummy sprang up.

Jim had the sharper ears. "That ain't the mail," he said coolly. "It's from the lake."

"Blest if it ain't a York boat from the Settlement," said Bud, at the door.

Jim followed him more leisurely. "And Sollersy himself," he added, as the boat drew closer.

The long, open galley drew into the river, propelled by four heavy, clumsy sweeps, and landed below Pete's shack. Benny Sollers, the "French Outfit's" head trader, approached them, leaving his 'breed crew to pitch camp on the shore. Benny was a peppery little man, with a face as withered as a last year's apple. He was wearing a complete suit of black, a starched collar, a store tie, and an outside hat, a derby, such as was rarely seen in those parts; yet it was not at this grandeur that the three men stared, but at Benny's mustache, sticking out bravely each side of his face, and as black as his hat.

Benny was none too pleased to see Bud and Jim. "Quite a crowd!" he said sarcastically.

"How-de-do, Benny. How-de-do," said old Pete.

"I brought you a box of cigars, Pete," said Benny grandly.

"Much obliged to ye, Benny," said old Pete abstractedly. His eyes were still glued to the mustache.

"You take it pretty cool," said Benny irritably. "One would think cigars grew on trees up North. Bet there ain't a man hereabouts ever had a whole box but a trader."

"Much obliged, Benny," repeated Pete. "It certainly was white of you."

"What are you looking at?" demanded Benny.

"Them whiskers of yours, Benny," said Pete deprecatingly. "They look so funny in your face!"

"Dyed, by gum!" said Bud. Up North even a trader may expect to hear the truth about himself.

Benny set off a whole string of oaths, like firecrackers.

"It ain't dye!" he cried. "No such a thing! It's hair restorer. Just brings out the natural color!"

"Take your hat off, and let's see the top," suggested Jim.

Benny jammed his hat down. "Dinged if I will!" said he.

By this time Pete had pried open the cigar box. "Help yourself, boys," he said, passing it.

Benny looked very sour, seeing the other visitors sharing in his gift. When the box came to him, he took a handful, and stowed the extra ones in his pocket.

"On your way out, Benny?" asked Pete. "This is an onexpected trip, ain't it?"

"Just come down to meet the mail," said Benny carelessly.

"My dorter's comin' with the mail," said Pete proudly.

"So I hear tell," said Benny. "Must be quite a girl."

"Eighteen," said Pete. "Bud, there, seen her last fall."

"She's a little queen," said Bud truculently, as if some one had denied it.

"No doubt," said Benny, unmoved. "But is she healthy, handy?"

"Healthy!" shouted Bud. "Slick as a bear in September! As for cookin' and gardenin' and tendin' sick folks, the sisters can't learn her no more."

"Good!" said Benny, rubbing his hands. "Pete, my boat is in pretty bad shape. Will you come down and take a look at it?"

The other two men were not deceived by Benny's little ruse. Under their breaths they separately cursed him.

Outside, Benny said: "Your daughter comin' in now falls handy for me, Pete. I need a wife, with all them children growin' up."

Pete started to rub his chin again.

"Of course, I could go outside and get one," Benny continued, "but there's an awful lot to do this summer, and I can't spare the time. And your girl is just the thing for me!"

"So you're going to take a white girl this time," said Pete, without intending any sarcasm.

"Yes, they're better workers," said Benny.

Pete made the same answer to Benny as to the others. "Ast her yourself, Benny. I ain't a-goin' to interfere!"

Benny and Pete finally returned to the shack. Benny looked around, and asked suspiciously: "Where's Frank Mills?"

At the mention of this name both Bud and Jim scowled heavily. "Ain't seen him in a month," growled the latter. "I didn't stop when I come by his place to-day."

"Frank's a likely young feller," said old Pete innocently.

The other three turned on him simultaneously and indignantly. "Likely young feller nothin'!" cried Benny. "Impident young whippersnapper! That's what I call him!"

"Makes me sick!" said Bud. "Thinks he's a humorist, too!" and Bud rolled his eyes in agony.

"Too big for his shoes, he is," growled Jim.

For the moment the three visitors became almost friendly in their united animosity.

"They tell me he's buildin' a two-story house," said Benny contemptuously. "With a pair of stairs! Did you ever hear the like!"

"Oh, you couldn't never teach him nothin'," said Bud, with heavy sarcasm. "He's so sharp it's a wonder he don't fall down and cut hisself!"

"Twenty-five years old," muttered Jim, under his breath.

"Does he know your daughter's comin' in?" asked Benny.

"Ev'ybody seems to know," said Pete, opening his eyes.

"Has he been round here?"

"Ain't seen him in a month, no more than Jim."

An uneasy silence descended on the trio of visitors. Old Pete did his best to keep them entertained, but his gentle prattle had no more effect than wavelets washing the base of a sea wall. Even he was conscious of the inimical atmosphere, and his voice trailed off into silence. One after another of the three suitors would get up, go to the door, and look down river with great carelessness. Finally Benny Sollers drew out an immense silver watch.

"Eight o'clock," he said. "The mail 'ull never come through to-night. No need of you fellers waitin'."

"What's the use of makin' an extra trip?" said Jim, with equal carelessness. "I brought my bed with me. I kin roll up anywheres."

"Under my wagon's good enough for me," said Bud.

Benny scowled, and another silence descended upon them. The tension momentarily grew greater. Every time Jim or Bud took a cigar, Benny made an annoyed noise in his throat. He said, at last:

"Seems like some wooden heads can't take a hint!"

"Mebbe they ain't feelin' receptive to it," said Jim dryly.

"What's bitin' you, Benny Sollers?" said Bud heatedly. "We ain't a-visitin' you!"

"Hush your niggling," said old Pete comfortably. "Nobody ever hits the trail at eight o'clock at night. Let's have a game of jack pot."

The suggestion was welcomed all around. They pulled the boxes around Pete's table, wherefrom the little oil lamp shone in their eyes, and gave out an evil smell. Each put up a five-dollar bill for a carton of sulphur matches, in lieu of chips.

But when the cards were dealt around, the situation was not at all improved. Benny and Bud were bad players, the former too timid, the latter too impatient. They bickered continually, and made sarcastic remarks at each other, after this fashion:

"Hear you had a big time in town, Bud. Busted a plate-glass winder, and fetched up in the lockup. How much did it cost you?"

"That's my business. Anyhow, I ain't sixty-seven years old, with a passel of little brunettes at hum!"

This went on, until Jim threw down his cards in disgust. "Ah, what's the use!" he said. "There's too many of us in this game. Each of us has got as bad a chance as the other. Bud here is a booze fighter, and Benny's as old as Methusalem, and me, I'm just an ornery son of a gun of a prospector that ain't never struck it. We're on'y standin' in each other's light. We'll play for who's to stop here. Pete, you cash in and be umpire."

Jim had never been known to make such a long speech. It made an impression. Whatever the other two may have thought of it, they were shamed into accepting his challenge.

Pete retired, and the game went on, this time in silence. It was agreed that the first show-down should decide, but to equalize the chances, any player might drop out, in which case the winner of the pot must continue to play him until it came to a show-down. Bud and Benny each played such a cautious game that it was a long time before a show-down of any kind was reached. They were waiting for sure things. Jim gathered in their matches with a grim smile.

"At any rate, I'm makin' money," he said.

Jim opened the pot, and both Bud and Benny came in. Jim drew three cards, Bud two, and Benny one. Jim bet five matches with a confident air; Bud, after a moment of agonized indecision, elected to see him, and Benny, with a shaking hand, raised him five. So the struggle was on. Benny's face was like scribbled parchment; Bud was agitatedly biting the ends of his fingers; only Jim showed the inscrutable poker face, and he had them badly scared. Jim raised Benny ten; Bud, pale and shaken, finally decided to stay; and Benny, gasping with excitement, called.

Jim, with a shrug, threw down his openers, a pair of aces. This time his bluff had failed to carry. Bud, with a sob of relief, showed a full house, kings and deuces, and reached out his hand for the pot. But old Benny laid a restraining claw on his wrist, and put down—a straight flush!

Jim laughed and filled his pipe; that was how he took it. Bud jumped up, violently cursing his luck, and kicked over the box on which he had been sitting. As for Benny, he jumped up, showing a row of blackened and broken stumps in his delight, and clapped old Pete between the shoulders.

"Not too old to turn a trick on them yet!" he cried, his voice sliding into falsetto. "You won't be sorry for this, old Pete, neither. Soon as we're married you come up to the Settlement, and I'll let you have that shack behind the store to live in, and give you a soft job!"

In the midst of Benny's transports the door opened, and a tall, uncommonly good-looking young white man ducked his head under the lintel, and came in.

"Frank Mills!" they murmured, for the moment all a bit stupefied with astonishment. Suddenly, at the sight of Benny's discomfiture, Bud and Jim burst into uproarious laughter.

"You'll have to beat him out now," they cried.

Benny's face was convulsed with rage. "Get to thunder out of here!" he cried.

The young man looked astonished, then he began to laugh, too. "Since when are you the boss of this outfit, Mr. Sollers?" he asked. "I came to have a word in private with Pete."

They began to see that he, too, was laboring under some excitement. He flushed and grew pale, and seemed to be of two minds whether to laugh or lose his temper. He led the way out. As old Pete started to shuffle after him, Benny detained him.

"Remember, I said a house at the Settlement, and a nice, soft job!"

They were gone a long time. To the three remaining in the cabin it was obvious that the young man had come to make his suit to Rose's father, as each of them had done before him.

"What are you two waiting for?" snarled Benny.

"Oh, we're out of this," said Jim coolly. "We're just onlookers."

"I got Pete fixed, all right," blustered Benny. "He'll send that young sprig to the rightabout!"

Pete finally did come in alone. He looked oddly. He sat down suddenly on a box, as if his knees had failed him.

"Is it all right?" demanded Benny.

"Sure. it's all right," said Pete weakly.

"Has he gone home?"

"Sure, he's gone home."

"Didn't I tell you!" cried Benny triumphantly to the other two. "Now, clear out, the both of you!"

Pete started talking gently to himself, without noticing that they were still there. "Seems hard," he muttered, "after I cleaned up the place so nice! And burned up all my newspapies! And old clothes! I won't never be comfortable in such a high-toned outfit!"

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Benny sharply.

"You needn't wait," said Pete indifferently, "you, nor none of you. She's gone."

"Gone!" they cried.

"That's what I said," said Pete. "The kid has copped my Rosy!"

"Frank Mills?"

"Im-hym! Seems he's been writin' her three years back. And me payin' fer her schoolin' just to make a good wife fer him! That's what he's buildin' the outside house fer. And when it come time fer her to come in, he snuk down to the Landing, and they was spliced down there, and he brung her up in his boat ahead of the mail. She was a-skeared to face me, so he come in to break the news. I just seen her; her face was as bright as the new moon, and her voice as soft as a pigeon's in the spring, so I s'pose I hadn't ought to kick. He's took her home with him, and I'm going over in the morning. I wisht I hadn't burned up my newspapies!"

The shack reverberated with the sound of Benny's and Bud's profanity. Jim, after his manner, took it quietly. Benny snatched up the box of cigars, and flung out of the house. They heard him arousing his sleeping crew on the beach.

"If you'll gimme that knife, Pete, I'll have a good edge put on it," said Bud shamefacedly.

Pete handed it over, without any illusions about getting it back. Bud followed Benny out. Only Jim remained. Pete mutely pointed to the lynx robe.

"Ah, what do you take me for!" snarled Jim. "I ain't no redskin!" He lingered, having something further on his mind. "Look a-here, Pete," he said gruffly. "I don't want to go around the Frank Mills' outfit, but you tell Frank from me that I knocked together a fancy table, and a wall cupboard, thinking I might need them. He's welcome to 'em if he'll come after 'em."

The Winning Game

By A. M. Chisholm

Author of "The Come-On," "The British Investor," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS.

Disgusted with political conditions, John Barton, banker, gets together a group of men to beat Sam Fox, boss of the corrupt "machine." Barton's daughter, Beth, is run down by a fire horse and narrowly escapes death. Young Sam Fox, son of the political boss, saves her at the risk of his own life. "Tough luck!" Sam bewails when he learns the identity of the girl, for he is strongly attracted to her. He is churlishly thanked by Barton, but is made happy by Beth's invitation to call. Barton sees little hope of bettering political conditions, but Halloran, a straight-talking contractor, who has broken with Boss Fox, tells the banker that he is "playing the wrong system." There is a meeting of the Citizens' League and Halloran sets forth his views. "Split the party!" is his watchword, and he proposes that Robert J. Delafosse, a young lawyer who has defended many clients in the underworld, be placed on the reform ticket. This is agreed to. Delafosse makes up the slate and insists that the candidates he names be accepted. There is some squabbling, but he has his way. Sam Fox, Junior, following a call on Beth, where he had also met Delafosse, comes upon Barney Shea, a college chum, who confesses that he has come to town to "expose the grafters." Young Fox laughs at him, but Shea declares that he means business.

CHAPTER VI.—(*Continued.*)

THOUGH Delafosse and Halloran worked underground, and as quietly as possible, faint noises of their operations struck sensitive ears. One afternoon Sam Fox sought Matty Donovan's establishment, finding its proprietor in the gymnasium attached to the "athletic club."

Mr. Donovan had discarded his street regalia, his temporary attire consisting of running trunks, sweater, soft-soled shoes, and eight-ounce gloves. Similarly garbed, or ungarbed, save that, being down to weight, he wore no clothing above his waist, Jerry Pratt faced him.

Mr. Pratt's chin was tucked into the shelter of a very red left shoulder, and there were red spots on his ribs and over his kidneys. Otherwise his clean, hard flesh was a beautiful dusky white, overlying little bunches of mobile muscles that leaped and rippled unexpectedly as he moved. He wore a chronic grin about as pleasant and reassuring as the dental exhibit of a bull terrier.

Two other gentlemen, sweater-clad, one holding a watch, stood by.

Mr. Donovan appeared to pout, but that was because it was impossible to do anything else with a swollen lower lip. His face was very red, and perspiration dripped from him.

"Hello!" he said. "Whyn't you come earlier? This is the last round. Bet I've lost three pounds."

"You're winded, Matty," said Sam.

"Pretty near it," acknowledged Donovan. "That's Jerry's footwork. He's like a shadow. And punch! Look at me lip! What he'll do to Kid Walsh will be a shame. Come on, Jerry, I got ozone enough for two minutes more, anyway."

He fiddled for an instant, and planted his left glove, with some force, against the southwest corner of Mr. Pratt's smile. At the same instant Mr. Pratt's glove smote him amidships, and made him grunt. Followed a violent and chaotic two minutes. The men were practically fighting, with steam behind every punch; but they fought coolly, and with perfect good temper.

"I ought to do more work," said Donovan, untying the tapes of his mitts with his teeth. "I ain't in shape. Jerry

The first part of this story began two weeks ago in the September Month-end POPULAR, which can be had of any news dealer.

can hold me right now, and I'm pretty near a heavy. Like to try him yourself? Do you good."

"Do I vote here?" asked Mr. Pratt. "I ain't no white man's hope, see! He's got a mile reach and sixty pounds on me, and he can keep it. I don't take no chances on steam rollers. Let Petey give him a work-out."

Sam grinned at Pete Mullins, an ex-light-heavyweight, and Mr. Mullins grinned back. They were accustomed to spar and wrestle for half an hour three times a week, and respected each other accordingly.

"Jerry's got a yellow streak like a pike road," said Mullins. "He won't give away a pound. He——"

"Oh, choke it!" said Jerry. "Ever hear about the time Petey laid down?"

Mullins sprang for him. Jerry tripped him, leaped lightly to a hanging ring, swung to another with monkeylike agility, and sailed down the gymnasium to the punching bag, which he proceeded to batter vigorously.

Sam sat on a vaulting horse, and watched him, chatting with Mullins. Donovan emerged fresh from his shower and rub, and they went down to the café together.

"He'll send Walsh over the K. O. route," Donovan predicted. "You can get down any loose coin you have. It's like sopping up gravy with bread."

"If he fights on the level," said Sam.

"He will, because I've got money on him. Anyway, I'm putting down a little bunch for him, to make sure."

Sam nodded. "Was that what you wanted to see me about?"

"No," Donovan replied, "I want to know if there's anything new?"

"What about?"

"Politics. What's Halloran doing now?"

"Nursing a grouch, I guess. Why?"

"Well, take it from me, he ain't counted out yet. He's on his feet, trying to get one across."

"He can't slip anything across," said Sam confidently. "What are you going on?"

"A week ago," said Donovan, "he went down to Crabb's place, and didn't come out for an hour. Him and Crabb was upstairs talking private. Then, a week ago, Kelliher is on the beat in Middle Ward, and he sees a bunch going into the Guarantee Block by twos and threes, about nine o'clock. There's old Barton, and Kinsley, and the gospel mixer, Goodwillie, and a lot more of them come-ons, and last of all is Halloran, with Delafosse, the lawyer. So Kelliher keeps cases on the entrance, and they stay till near twelve. Tell me the answer."

Sam shook his head.

"Nor me, neither," said Donovan, as if he had spoken; "but it's a pipe something's being framed. And then there's a young newspaper feller named Shea nosing around the city hall and other places he has no business to be. He was in here the other night, and gave me the X-ray eye. I don't like him."

"I do," said Sam. "He's a friend of mine, Matty. I want all the boys to treat him white."

"If *you* say so," Donovan agreed. "Well, there's the layout, and I think the little ball is a-rolling right now."

"Looks that way," said Sam; "but I can't call the number. I'll mention it, though."

"Do," said Matty. "If your old man can't call it, there's no use of us tryin'."

CHAPTER VII.

Miss Fanny Dawson's apartments—referred to by their occupant as "the flat"—consisted of two small rooms, wherein space was at a premium. Miss Dawson's household gods, therefore, were arranged with the single aim of economizing territory. The room was noticeably devoid of feminine trifles. There were no workbaskets, no fancy work, no bric-a-brac. Miss Dawson's diploma, a few pictures, a banjo, a tennis racket, a set of foils, and gloves, a pair of worn snowshoes obviously masculine, and sundry large-figured calendars adorned the walls. Against one stood a crowded bookcase. The furniture consisted of several inviting easy-chairs, a couch, a workmanlike writing table, and a most unfeminine ash tray.

Beth lay back in one of the easy-chairs, listening critically. Miss Dawson, seated by the desk, read a manuscript aloud.

"Now tell me what you think of it," she demanded. "It came back to-day for the sixth time. Where does it fall down? I've had worse, to my notion, accepted by the same people."

"I don't know," Beth confessed. "I like it, Dawsy. It's awfully clever. Perhaps if the ending were happier and——"

"Nothing to do with it," said Miss Dawson, with conviction. "Every man reader quits a story when he sees the happy ending coming, just as he puts on his overcoat when the finale starts. Only women read on to the last conventional words. The unhappy, unusual endings stick. I wish some editor would loosen up, and tell me where I'm wrong, instead of sending a beastly, impersonal rejection slip. I'd be eternally grateful. Only they're not running correspondence schools."

She pondered, frowning. Suddenly, with a decisive movement, she tore the manuscript across, and threw it in the wastebasket.

"Oh, Dawsy, what a shame!" cried Beth.

"The thing is no good as it stands," said Miss Dawson. "If I kept it I'd waste time rewriting it, and it would be only a copy, after all. Now I've got the idea in my head still, and in about a year I'll go at it again with some chance of making a better job. See?"

"You talk of writing a story as you might of making a box."

"Well, where's the difference, except that you can always get material for a box? Heavens, child! You're not still a victim of the 'literary inspiration' theory, are you?"

"I suppose I am—as to the modern classics, at least."

"There's a fetish that ought to be hit with an ax," scoffed Miss Dawson. "Take it from me, little Sister May, that writing a story is downright, hard, tedious work; and the easier it is to read the harder it was to write. It would take an inspired reader to follow a writer who worked on inspiration. It's an exploded idea, surviving mostly in highbrow circles. The erudite persons who write about literature and talk about it are those who can't make it. The people who make it are too busy to talk shop. Inspiration? Bosh! It's just plain digging."

"Don't destroy my ideals," laughed Beth. "Do you teach this heresy, Dawsy?"

"I don't dare to," Miss Dawson confessed. "No, my dear, I am an orthodox little lady in business hours. It's hard at times, but I must drag down my so much per, or go out in the cruel storm from these ancestral halls." She sighed, for at times bright, slangy, warm-hearted Fanny Dawson found life a trifle weary.

"Cheer up, old girl," said Beth affectionately. "You are making a living and getting ahead, while I am idling my time away."

"Now there's something," said Miss Dawson. "Whatever are you going to do with yourself, Beth? Of course, you don't have to work—lucky you!—and, of course, you'll get married. But until then?"

"I don't know," Beth answered. "What makes you think I'll be married?"

"Go into the next room, and look at the mirror," said Fanny. "Why, you're destined for matrimony. If I were a man I'd be crazy about you. I don't want to pry into your affairs, but there are two candidates already—Mr. Fox and Mr. Delafosse."

The rich color swept up to the roots of Beth's fair hair. "How absurd! They are friends of mine, that's all."

The sound of the bell was a welcome interruption for Beth.

"That," said Miss Dawson, "is probably Barney Shea."

"And who is Barney Shea?"

"Mr. Shea," Miss Dawson replied, "besides having the usual blood of Irish kings in his veins, enjoys the distinction of being the side kick, the pal, the special chum, the *alter ego* of my big brother, Jeff—that's the one who is

hunting for 'too much gold' somewhere this side of the north pole, and hasn't found it, or any noticeable indication of it as yet. Barney was a sort of balance wheel for Jeff. Mr. Shea is poor but honest—for a newspaper man. Also, he is interested in 'problems.'"

"Including Jeff's sister?" queried Beth sweetly.

"If he isn't, he ought to be. He's a good boy, is Barney. You'll like him."

Beth did like Shea, and he liked her. He was evidently on almost brotherly terms with Fanny Dawson, who installed him in the easiest chair, set the ash tray beside him, and, to Beth's astonishment, produced a box of cigars.

"I keep them for good little boys like Barney," she explained. "It's the easiest form of masculine refreshment I know of. Heavens, Barney, there are only four left!"

"I'll bring a box to-morrow," said Shea.

"Well, I guess you won't!"

"But it's up to me," he insisted. "I smoked most of these."

"What do you suppose I bought them for? You try to bring a box, and see what happens to you."

"All right, Fanny," he laughed. "That doesn't apply to candy, does it?"

"Candy," said Miss Dawson, "is the peculiar spoil of woman. Ah, stupid of me! Now I get you!"

She seized his overcoat, and extracted from the pocket an ornate, ribbon-tied box. They feasted on the contents, laughing, throwing gay jests at each other. The friendship of Fanny Dawson supplied a common ground for Beth and Shea, abrogating formality. And so they were chatting gayly when once more the bell rang.

This time it was Sam Fox who called for Beth. His surprise at seeing Shea was only equaled by the latter's at seeing him.

"Why, you know each other!" said Miss Dawson, who had accomplished the first words of an introduction.

"Of course," said Shea, "but I wasn't aware——"

"Neither was I," said Fox. "Unfortunately, Barney, my acquaintance with Miss Dawson doesn't date back very far."

"Oh, you've known her by proxy for years," said Shea, laughing. "Why, Sam, she's Jeff's sister Fanny."

"What?" cried Sam. "You don't mean it? Miss Dawson, what did you hold out on me for?"

"I didn't. How could I know you knew Jeff? Why didn't you tell me?"

"Why, he had your photo in his room," said Sam. "I recognize you now. But your hair is done differently, and you're—er——"

"Older," supplied Miss Dawson; "so are you. Now I remember. I saw you play football once. You were hurt—carried off the field. Jeff said it lost the game for us."

Fox laughed in joyous reminiscence. "Hardly that. But he and I were tearing a few little holes in 'em when I got smashed up. Yes, they kept me in the hospital a couple of weeks. That was why I never met you."

The conversation centered on Jeff Dawson, what he had done, what he would do, where he was doing it. Those were his snowshoes on the wall, Fanny told them, the ones he had worn when he was snowblind, and followed the old, drifted sled trail by the feel of the harder-packed snow beneath his feet.

They examined the great rackets curiously; the wear-darkened babiche of the webbing, thin to breaking beneath the frames; the frames themselves scraped smooth as with glass and sandpaper by league upon league of crusted snow. Yes, that was Jeff Dawson every time. No lie-down to him, no quitter—not much. Clear sand, and the strength of a moose. He would get there, if any man could. Why, that time——

Beth listened, pleased and interested, studying the three joined by a common bond. Why was it that mutual acquaintance with and liking for one human being should draw other human beings, utterly dissimilar in taste and purpose, together? Another of the inexplicable vagaries of mankind, gregarious mentally as well as physically, eagerly seizing on the mental companionship of a common interest.

"We're boring Beth," Fanny declared. She offered Fox the hospitality of the cigar box, pressing another smoke upon Shea. One cigar remained. That, she declared, she would pack in a tin tube and send to Jeff. It would be a sort of reunion. He could smoke it and think of them. She got down the banjo and picked ragtime. They sang alleged songs of the levee and the plantation. Afterward they had coffee, made over a gas jet, and biscuits.

Beth declared that she must go. It was getting late. She hadn't laughed so much in months.

"Same here," said Sam. "Here, I'll tell you: All of you take dinner with me to-morrow night, and we'll go to the theater afterward."

But Beth had an engagement. The time of the others, too, was occupied. Fox relinquished the idea temporarily, but insisted that it was only postponed. They must have some good times together. He was getting into a rut; they all were. They must shake themselves up, and make things move.

Beth and he descended to the street. The night was bright and cold. Fox would have telephoned for a cab, but she wouldn't have it. It was extravagance. Nor would she take a car. She wanted to walk.

She took his arm, and they set out briskly. The neatly gloved hand lying on his forearm exhilarated Fox. He expanded his great chest, filling his lungs with the pure night air, and laughed aloud. Beth looked at him questioningly.

"It's the way I'm feeling," he explained. "I've had a good time; just the time that suits me. I like old Jeff's sister awfully well. Teaches school, does she? I'll bet she hates it. We must get something better for her. I'll see what can be done."

"Why, what *can* be done?" asked Beth, a little startled at the assurance with which this young man took charge of other people's affairs. "Do you know of a better position that is open?"

"Oh, we'll open one, or make a new one," said Fox. "But you mustn't mention that I had anything to do with it. Old Jeff was proud as Lucifer, and I can see that she is, too. But the way it will come to her, she'll never suspect."

"But what will come to her? What is the position?"

"I haven't the least idea yet. But it will have a decent salary annexed. How would it be if you sounded her gently, and found out what she'd like?"

"You mean to say you'd create an office just for her?"

"Half a dozen of them," he replied promptly. "Why not?"

"But if the office was not needed it would be a waste of money."

"Oh, well, half the offices in this country are sinecures. That's why there are so many applicants."

"That may be true, but it's a poor argument," said Beth. "You can't justify it that way."

"I thought you were a friend of Miss Dawson's?"

"That has nothing to do with it. I am; but I shouldn't approve of her taking a position of that kind; and, anyway, she wouldn't take it."

"She wouldn't know."

"I should tell her."

"Oh, I don't think so. You wouldn't like to come between your friend and a good salary."

"A nice position to place me in!" said Beth indignantly.

"I don't think you'll be placed in it. Miss Dawson is too clever to be wasted on a useless job. She'll earn all the money she gets—be sure of that."

Beth was silenced, though but partly convinced. In this case, it might be all right, but the principle—the careless creation of positions for friends, their salaries paid by the taxpayers' money—was all wrong. And yet it was evidently a matter of course to Sam Fox. He spoke of it frankly, as an ordinary thing. He saw no harm in it.

"Is that the way the city's affairs are run?" she asked. "Do people get positions and salaries simply because they are friends of those in office, without reference to ability or usefulness?"

"That's putting it rather strongly. Naturally friends of the administration

get what is going. That is so the world over."

"Does that hold all through—with positions, contracts, favors of all kinds?"

"Certainly."

"Then it's a wrong system," Beth declared. "It must lead to favoritism and dishonesty, waste and extravagance. If I were a man I would do my best to change it."

"You would be tilting at windmills, or the eternal hills," said Fox. "Don't think that these conditions are confined to this city, or that they are new. No administration can afford to turn down its friends. The party that resists their demands loses office."

"Which is tantamount to saying that an honest party—honest in office—cannot retain office."

"Exactly."

"I don't believe it!" said Beth. "I can't believe in such a condition of public morals. It would mean that we, as a people, are dishonest."

"Well, aren't we?"

The words, careless and evidently sincere, shocked her. Here was no pose, no attitude, no striving for effect. Plainly he believed in an unqualified affirmative.

"No, we are not!" she said. "Why do you say we are?"

"Because I think so," said Fox. "This pretense of honesty is the greatest sham of the century. Business is just as bad as politics. We are engaged in cheating each other, and pretending that we don't. The dishonest con man sells the farmer a gold brick; the honest farmer packs the best apples on top of the box. Where is the material difference? Half the stores give short weight, short measure, spurious goods. Our ablest financiers skin the public in the stock market. The decisions of many of our courts are bought for cash. We are top-heavy with money dishonestly obtained. The press, or most of it, is controlled by money or party, and keeps up the sham. We keep it up ourselves, and some of us believe it. But I don't."

"You are taking exceptions as the rule. For one dishonest man or dishonest act, there are thousands of honest ones."

"Of course. But that is because the opportunity for dishonesty is comparatively rare, while honesty does not need an opportunity."

"I can't agree with you. I don't think we have degenerated. Mankind is just as honest now as it ever was."

"Granted. But when was it honest?"

"When? I don't understand you."

"Was it ever more honest than now? I don't think so. It was merely more brutal. Men took by force what they now get in other ways."

"Generalities again! What of the men and women who have endured tortures, not for personal gain, or money even, but for a mere belief? Were they honest or not?"

"They were cranks," said Fox. "Half the martyr stories are apocryphal, anyway. For the rest, it's hard to say whether they died for principle or of obstinacy."

She was silent, pained. She found his words flippant. It was as if some rude hand had struck a fragile treasure, for to her the memory of those who had died—grandly, as she saw it—for an idea had always been sacred.

"And these," she said at length, "are really your beliefs, or lack of beliefs?"

"In general terms, yes," he replied. "I don't despise or pretend to be better than my fellow man. I grant an honest minority. I like most people, and I'm not a pessimist. I take things as I have found them, just as you take what you have found, and draw your own conclusions. The difference between our opinions is merely that I have seen things done, and rubbed against the people who were actually doing them, while you have merely read of things, and your companions have been those whose knowledge of practical affairs was no greater than your own."

"That is, I don't know what I am talking about?"

"I didn't say that, or mean it. Our associations and experiences have been different, that is all. Naturally you won't believe in the existence of condi-

tions in which you don't wish to believe, unless you have very good evidence."

"Assuming that these conditions do exist," she said gravely, after a moment's silence, "what are *you* doing to better them?"

For a moment he regarded her in astonishment, suspicious of a double meaning. A nice question to ask him, the son and right-hand man of old Sam Fox.

"Nothing," he replied. "You see, I'm part of the conditions—a product of them."

Whatever her motive in asking the question, she did not pursue it. With the answer, the subject was dropped.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Halloran and Delafosse and the main works of the Citizens' League, hey?" said old Sam Fox, rubbing his chin thoughtfully. "That's the third meeting we know of. Couldn't you find out what they were doing?"

"Well," said Donovan, "the outer office was dark and unlocked. It looked like a cinch to sneak across it to the room where they were, and listen in. That's what Nosey tried to do. But some wise guy had the door tied with a string of sleigh bells, it sounded like. Soon as Nosey opens her a couple of inches he trips the combination and starts the merry chimes. Of course, he fades sudden. Then he opened an office up above, and went down the fire escape to the window; but the blinds were down, and he couldn't stir the sash, workin' easy. And he couldn't hear. So he called it a day. It beat him."

"And now they know that some one is taking a kindly interest in their affairs," commented young Sam, with a grin.

"They had a stiff hunch, and hung the bells to make sure," said Donovan. "Now there's a poor chance."

"Don't try," said Fox. "I can guess close enough, and a few weeks will tip their hand, anyway. Halloran has thrown in with them to get square with me, that's all there is to it."

"He can swing quite a bunch of votes," said Donovan.

"He thinks he can," Fox amended. "He did when he swung them for us. When he tries to switch them he'll find out the difference."

"I guess that's so," Donovan admitted, reassured. "We got some good workers on his pay sheets. I'll see them. But, say—about Delafosse! He's some class, all right. There's a lot of the boys go to him pretty regular with their troubles. He knows the tough bunch by their first names, and he's *smart*."

"I know it," said Fox. "Yes, he's smart. All right, Matty, suppose he is?"

"Nothing," said Donovan. "I guess he'll be lonesome with those guys." And, so saying, he took his departure.

Fox smoked thoughtfully for some minutes. "Well," he said to his son, "now that we know where Halloran is at, we might as well give him something to think about."

The next day, work on certain contracts which Mr. Halloran was performing came to an abrupt pause. The assistant city engineer objected to the quality of cement in one, to the strength of the structural iron in another, to the bricks used in a third.

Halloran descended on him like a tornado. The assistant engineer, usually complaisant, was now firm. He was very sorry, but he couldn't help it. Why hadn't he kicked sooner? Because he had been too busy to get around to these jobs. He couldn't be everywhere at once. Positively he could not allow these materials to go into the work on his own responsibility. As he read the contracts, it was not a compliance with them. Mr. Rodman, the city engineer, would have to decide.

Halloran cursed understrappers and assistants aloud, and demanded Rodman. But Mr. Rodman, unfortunately, was absent. When would he return? That was hard to say. He had gone to another city to consult an oculist—a specialist of renown. His eyes——

Mr. Halloran's reference to the engineer's eyes was vigorous, but unsympathetic. Was his work to be held up, and was he to lose money on the say-so of a condemned transit squinter, who didn't know riprap from ballast, or cement from common lime? Whereupon the transit squinter in question ordered Mr. Halloran out of his office. The contractor went, not because the assistant engineer was a very healthy young specimen, but because it suddenly dawned on him that he was up against it, and a rough-and-tumble scrap in the city hall would not improve his position.

He got cold comfort from the mayor, a canny gentleman named Soper, who professed himself unable to interfere with the engineer's department.

"I know who's doing this, all right," said Halloran. "It's Fox."

"Mr. Fox, a private citizen, can scarcely have anything to do with a city contract," said Soper blandly. "I don't understand you, Mr. Halloran."

"All right, Soper," said Halloran. "The nerve of ye, to hand me such talk! We'll see what happens to ye next election, me buck."

The mayor closed one eye, and laughed. Whereupon Halloran went raging to Delafosse.

"I expected this," said the latter. "You can't do anything just now. Technically they are within their rights. You'll have to wait for Rodman, or else give them what the contract calls for."

"I'm givin' them just as good," growled Halloran.

"I understand that, of course."

"It's a loss to me. I've bought me materials, and me men are idle."

"You'll have to stand the gaff," Delafosse told him. "If we win out, you can put in a claim for damages."

The papers featured the matter as an item of local news, safeguarding various nasty accusations by the magic words "It is alleged." The effect was shown in other contracts which Halloran was performing for private individuals and corporations. These began to scrutinize his work carefully, and, in some instances, to find fault. He lost prestige. This rendered his enmity to Fox more bitter.

Meanwhile he and Delafosse were busy, though as yet keeping carefully under cover. Even the leaguers' leaders were not in their confidence. Each pursued his own way, creating an organization out of scattered malcontents, drawing to them men who had nothing to hope for under the iron rule of Fox, fomenting disaffection where it already existed, creating it where it did not.

Delafosse dived deep into the underworld, where his name was a power, a shelter, and a hope for the lawbreaker. Many a man he had defended successfully without a fee, and each had his friends. He began to reap the reward of years of silent work, of the popularity he had courted apparently without object. His quiet canvass disclosed a success greater than he had dared to hope.

"With any sort of luck, we'll beat Fox," he told Halloran. "We have the foreign vote, or most of it."

"How did ye get the dagos?"

Delafosse smiled and shook his head.

"Well, I can guess," said Halloran. "Ye could send a padrone or two over the road if ye liked."

"That's your guess. I'm not talking. How about your own men?"

"Most of them are all right, or else they will be. I've fired the men Fox had in my gangs. Then I've seen Crabb and half a dozen more. They're with us solid. They're working now on the quiet, and they'll bring down a big vote from the shanties. I've arranged to pay for that."

Delafosse nodded. "That's good! We'll do better than we thought. The only question in my mind is whether our coworkers in the league can deliver the goods."

"They're children, so they are," said Halloran, frowning. "Sure, I hinted to ould Barton the other day—only hinted, mind ye—that it might be well to go over the paper his bank holds, and if there was any makers or indorsers that was apt to vote agin' us

he might—well, ye understand me. And he nigh jumped down me t'roat. Ye'd have thought I was proposin' to him to gut his vaults. I had to call it a joke."

"The devil! Halloran, you'll have to be more careful," Delafosse warned. "If Barton ever tells the others that you made a proposition like that you're done for. They won't see any joke in it. Even if Barton fell for it, and tried the trick, his business would be ruined forever if he made a mistake in his man."

"It's been done before in this town, and no mistake, and no ruin," returned Halloran sulkily. "Well ye know it."

"Very well I do know it, for it was done to me," said Delafosse grimly. "I kept my mouth shut, too. The man who did it is dead, or I'd make him sweat blood for it now."

Though their early organization was carried on quietly, it was not possible to keep it entirely secret. The news that Halloran had definitely broken with Fox leaked out; also that Delafosse, who was a good deal of a dark horse, would be a factor in the coming campaign. The *Examiner* admitted these things, and commented on them as hopeful signs. It even dwelt on them, thus covering the deeper purpose of the organization.

From being excessively mysterious and dropping dark hints of great things impending, Barton finally took his family into his confidence, under strict pledge of secrecy. He wished them to see that he was of the inner circle, one of the keen, plotting brains of the new government, and that he had not done so before spoke volumes for his self-control; for his was the constitutional inability, by no means rare, to refrain from the discussion of all matters in the domestic circle. As a matter of fact, this discussion was apt to take the form of a monologue.

"Not one word about it to any one, you understand," he said to his son.

"Sure not," said Billy. "But old Halloran with you! Say, that's funny."

"What's funny about it?" his father demanded. "That's no way to speak of your employer, young man."

"Why, he was always with the other crowd," said Billy, ignoring the reproof. "You can bet ould Michael Jawn is out with the big mitt for the long green every time."

"He's a business man," said Barton, with dignity. "He has very good reasons for joining us."

"I'll bet he has," said Billy, with meaning.

"Well, I'm glad Mr. Delafosse is helping you," said Mrs. Barton. "They say he's very clever. And, then, he's a lawyer, and knows how things ought to be done. I should think he could make a fine speech."

"Yes, yes, of course," said her husband. "*I* brought him out. I told the others we had to have him. Yes, I insisted on that point. When Halloran mentioned his name, I saw in a minute he was the man we wanted." Thus he brought himself into the spotlight.

Billy whistled softly, drawing a further reproof from his father. Beth heard the news with mingled feelings. She was glad, she told herself, that Delafosse was going into the fight for right and clean government. That was his plain duty, and she approved it. But it was unfortunate that young Fox was on the other side. She wished that he, too, were allied with the forces opposing graft.

Recently she had seen a great deal of Delafosse. In spite of the fact that he was very busy, he had been a frequent caller, dropping in several evenings a week. On these occasions his entertainment had fallen to Beth. Barton, fussily busy, was accustomed to rush out early and return late; Mrs. Barton usually found things to occupy her elsewhere; and Billy did not count. There was a tacit recognition by every one but Beth herself that he was her guest.

It occurred to her that in all their conversations he had never mentioned civic politics. When the subject had cropped up, he had sidetracked it deftly. Now, when the air was surcharged with it, he was reticent as ever. That evening she asked him why.

He laughed. "I have kept out of

politics religiously for years. I have never discussed it with anybody. It has become a habit. And then, I didn't suppose you were interested."

"But I am—immensely interested," said Beth. "My father has told us what you hope to do—in confidence."

Delafosse's eyes narrowed slightly. "Then I need not impress upon you the advisability of keeping it quiet for the present. You see, we are counting on taking the enemy by surprise."

"Yes, I understand. I hope you will win."

"Thank you. May I take that as a personal good wish?"

"But it wasn't very personal," said Beth honestly. "I meant all our candidates. One always wishes success to the right cause."

"Only that?" he said lightly, smiling. "Now, I hoped that you would make a distinction in my favor."

"I'll make it, then," laughed Beth. "Go forth and slay the dragon."

"For you?" he queried, leaning forward a little, his flexible voice striking just the right note between tenderness and jest.

"What an embarrassing trophy a dead dragon would be!" Beth parried. "Slay it for honor, and glory, and advancement, Sir Knight."

"I am apt to get a scratch or two in the process," he said. "The beast will die hard."

Beth welcomed the change of subject. "Tell me about it," she said. "I know you expect to get votes from the other side. What is the hope based on?"

He sketched the situation. "As for the base of our hope," he concluded, "it remains to be seen whether there is a base or not. The simple fact is that a number of people who have always voted the other way will vote for me. And Halloran has a great deal of influence. These things may or may not be enough to turn the scale."

"You haven't told me," she said, going to the root of the matter, as was her habit, "who these people are, or why they will vote for you. Why?"

For a moment he was embarrassed. Then he said frankly:

"It may shock you, but a large number of them are criminals, or near criminals—the tough, undesirable element of the city, which is more numerous than you or most people think. I will get this vote because I have had some success in defending people of their class in the courts, and my fees have always been modest, in many cases nominal. I know these people better than any man outside their own class. That is one thing. And then, to be quite candid, I have been preparing for this contest for years. I have paid for popularity in cash, in favors, in loss of time, in uncongenial associations—all to the one end. This is the end. Now I am to see whether I shall reap where I have sown."

She listened breathlessly, wide-eyed. The ambition that looked forward through the years, silent, farsighted, fashioning crude materials for its ends, building with men as with bricks, fascinated her. It was a game worth while, a man's game, a game for a big man, a strong man. She looked at Delafosse sitting opposite her, handsome, powerful, determined, seeing in him possibilities unsuspected before. How far would he go? Was this the summit of his ambition? Was this the total of his planning? Or had he other ends as yet unrevealed?

"It stuns one a little," she said. "It's out of the ordinary. You have worked, and you deserve success. But to think that if you win—if we win—the people who are all that is good, and clean, and respectable will really owe their success to the criminals and near criminals. It's a paradox."

"Very like it," he responded. "Of course, I don't want to be understood as saying that all my supporters are undesirables. That is one element only. Without the aid of the league, I wouldn't have a chance, of course. But that was a part of my calculations."

"Oh, I hope you do win!" she said impulsively. "You deserve it." Then, inconsequently: "Is there really as much corruption as is charged?"

"There is corruption. I don't know how much."

She hesitated before she put the next question:

"Who is mainly responsible for it?"

He, too, hesitated before replying:

"I think I would rather not give an opinion, if you don't mind."

In the words, she had her answer. More plainly than by direct charge, he accused the Foxes, father and son; refused details, or explanation, and forbade discussion. And yet the delicacy of the phrase was beyond question. He simply refused to make a reply reflecting on one presumably her friend.

She flushed a little, feeling a sudden constraint, at the same time telling herself that it was ridiculous. All along, she had known of the accusation. Fox had admitted it and laughed at it. He had no belief in the honesty of men; he had never claimed to be better than others. And yet, strangely, she believed him to be honest. Certainly he was a gentleman. Associations had not affected him outwardly. If, as her father believed, he consorted with toughs, his manner bore no trace of it.

The subject was not resumed. When at length Delafosse rose to go, he said:

"This election will take up most of my time from now on. Too bad. I don't think you know just how much I look forward to the evenings I spend here—with you."

She glanced at him swiftly. Obviously it was her move, but she said nothing. He was embarrassed.

"I mean it," he said, as awkwardly as a boy, and came to a full stop.

"Yes, of course," she said. "I enjoy them, too. After the election——"

He recovered his poise. "After the election," he said, "we will take them up again. If I win, I am going to ask you a question."

She pretended not to understand.

"Only if you win? What can it be, I wonder?"

"Shall I ask it now?" He was very close. Suddenly he took her hand in both his. Swiftly she withdrew it.

"No, no, please!" she exclaimed. "Not till—till—then!"

CHAPTER IX.

On the evening following the momentous one with Delafosse, Miss Dawson called on Beth in a state of high excitement.

"What's up?" said Beth. "You're simply bubbling over."

"Give you 'steen guesses and then some," said Fanny.

"It's Jeff—he's found a mine?"

"Not a bit like it. In fact, the latest bulletin from the front says that the old boy's broke, and working for a grubstake again. Beth, I've got to tell you something or *bust*. I've been offered the assistant librarianship, at a salary of twenty-five hundred a year! Honey, I hope I never come as near fainting again as when old Mr. Bland, the chairman of the board, made me the offer."

"You'll accept it?"

"Watch me," said Miss Dawson. "Oh, Beth, you don't know what that money means to me. Now I can put my kid sister through college, and I didn't see how I was going to do it before. You know, mother hasn't got much. She drew on her principal for me, and Jeff worked his college passage. And the kid's clever. She'll make good. And I can help mother—and old Jeff! Why, Beth, I can grubstake him—be his partner, you know—and get half of what he finds, if he finds anything. I—I——"

Miss Dawson's voice faltered, and she dabbed suddenly moist eyes with her handkerchief.

"I'm s-so d-d-darn silly!" she sobbed. "I'm crying, and I ought to be shaking hands with myself. How do you suppose they ever heard of me, Beth?"

But Beth, as Fox had foretold, professed ignorance. Surely if any one deserved a good position it was Fanny Dawson. It might be a piece of favoritism—no doubt it was—but Fanny would earn her salary, if it was possible for any one to do so. Her congratulations, therefore, were sincere, although she made up her mind to give Fox a severe lecture.

But the opportunity did not imme-

diately present itself. Sam was very busy just then. Little rumors, straws blown by the wind, came to the ears of old Sam Fox. He began to look into the situation, and while what he saw did not seriously alarm him it showed that the election would not, as in the past, be a walk-over.

But the announcement of the personnel of the Citizens' candidates was, to his followers, as the explosion of a mine beneath a supposedly impregnable forress. For the ticket was, in the main, made up of men who had supported the Fox candidates in the past. There were even one or two who had been elected as his candidates; and there was a noticeable fewness of the dignified business and professional men whose defeat had always been so easy.

Straightway the leaders of the party came together, and they came—metaphorically—running. It was a new deal—not only that, it was a new system—and it puzzled them exceedingly, as any departure from the recognized correct play is apt to puzzle experts. They could no longer count the cards in their opponents' hands, which formerly they had been able to do right down to small spots.

Little Roby, excitable, garrulous, and irritable, who represented River Ward in the council, flirted the back of his open hand against a sheet of paper on which he had written the names of the opposing candidates.

"Look-a here, look-a here now!" he vociferated. "What's the meaning of this? Say, this is a funny start. What d'ye know about it, hey? Is it a joke? If it is, who's it on?"

"It looks as though it might be on us," said Soper thoughtfully.

"But the highbrow league will never indorse them candidates," Roby insisted. "It's some kind of a plant, that's what it is. Yes, sir, a plant."

"You must 'a' seen a clairvoyant," said Donovan. Out of pure love of mischief, he liked to irritate Roby.

"Trouble is they've already indorsed them," said Soper.

"The size of it," said Fox—and at the sound of his voice they settled to attention—"the size of it is that Halloran and Delafosse have joined hands, and thrown in with the other crowd. We knew that before. How they've managed to get the league to accept these candidates is their own business. What concerns us is the fact that they stand to poll a big vote. Now, what we have to do is to take off our coats and get to work and get everybody working. Donovan will handle the money, same as usual. Now, let's go over these candidates, and see what strength each man has, and where it is."

They went over the names carefully, gauging the strength and weakness of each. This one had friends who might be won over; that one might be expected to receive a certain vote, which must be attended to; another might be amenable to pressure properly exerted. But, on the whole, comparatively little could be done with them. Still, none could tell what might happen between then and election day.

Now that they had talked the matter over, they felt confidence once more. They had beaten the league so often that they held it in contempt. The turncoat, Halloran, and the amateur, Delafosse, did not, after all, make so much difference. They were swelled heads; they needed a lesson. Well, they were in line to get it.

"What we lose on the free show we make up on the chutes," said Donovan. "Take Crabb, now. No decent people will vote for him. Of course," he added maliciously, "with Roby running against him they may not vote at all."

"What do you mean? What do you mean by that?" demanded Roby. "If you know anything against me, Donovan, you can say it. Come on, say it! Spit it out of you, now!"

"Don't you get too gay," warned Matty, winking slyly at Sam. "I know one or two things."

"Nobody would think it, to look at you," snapped Roby.

Donovan joined in the laugh that followed.

"You're all right, Joe," he observed. "Some day maybe you'll learn to take a joke."

"Some day maybe you'll learn to make one," retorted Roby, unappeased.

Once more the laugh was on Donovan. He grinned.

"It's your round," he admitted cheerfully. "You think too quick for me." Thereby he restored Roby's good humor, for an appreciation of his own powers of speech was the little man's weakness. He was, in fact, a ward spellbinder of some reputation.

"There's something in what Matty says, though," Sam remarked. "A lot of people won't like some of these candidates, and that fact will injure their ticket as a whole, won't it?"

"It may," said his father.

"Well, I hope it does," said Soper, who was again candidate for mayor. "It strikes me I'm getting the big end of the log myself. Delafosse will take some beating. I tell you right now, I'm not anxious to have any joint meetings."

"I'll meet him any time," said Roby.

Nobody paid any attention to him; nobody even smiled. The matter was too serious. It was recognized that whatever happened to the rest of the league's candidates, Delafosse himself would make an excellent run.

Steiner, another member of the council—a big man, with a red, inflamed face, and the peculiar, husky voice developed by much alcohol—cursed Delafosse and Halloran.

"We ought to smash both of them," he declared. "Who's Halloran? Don't we know he's been out for the stuff every time? Sure we do! He's no better than any one else. It's a joke, his lining up with that gang. And Delafosse! Five years or so ago, when he was in the council, didn't he vote as he was told, and don't we know why? Well, I guess we do! I say, smash 'em!"

"Ah, phut!" said Donovan, with contempt. "I got a photo of us in the act—not. We ain't going to raise no graft cry, you bet!"

But if they did not, the opposite party did. Shea had been disappointed in his investigations, but nevertheless he had picked up a few facts. And because he was an outsider, and a clever writer, at that, he managed to dish up the old stories in a new and attractive—or repulsive—form. The issue of the *Examiner* began to be looked for by the man on the street, and Shea's columns, pungent, logical, damning by resistless inference, were eagerly read.

He saw little of Sam Fox, but one day when he was shut in his office, grinding out copy, the latter walked in without ceremony.

Shea looked up, and his mouth tightened a little. He was in his shirt sleeves, disheveled, an extinct pipe between his teeth, and his toes were hooked around the forelegs of his chair, in his favorite working attitude. He anticipated no pleasure from the interview, and he felt constrained in advance.

"Barney," said Sam, "if there was a free trip to Europe offered to the most popular newspaper man in town—you wouldn't get it."

"I guess not," Shea admitted. "Well?"

"And, conversely, if one were offered to the most unpopular man you would win out."

"Maybe."

"How'd you like to go to Europe, Barney, for six months, or a year, just to broaden your outlook?"

Shea stared at him, the blood mounting slowly to his forehead. Fox met the gaze calmly, his own eyes a trifle narrowed, but entirely friendly.

"I didn't think it of you, Sam," said Shea reproachfully at last. "And, what's more, I don't believe you thought it of me."

"I didn't," Sam admitted; "but, all the same, I wish you'd go. You're *blamed* unpopular, Barney."

"I've written what I was paid to write, and what it was my duty to write," said Shea. He added, a trifle wistfully: "Naturally you don't regard me as a friend any more. I'm sorry, Sam."

"There's where you're wrong," said Sam. "I don't care a hang what you write, as long as it's not malicious. I'm here because I'm your friend. Fact is,

you're apt to get hurt if you keep up your present gait."

"Oh, nonsense!" scoffed Shea. "You can't scare me a little bit."

"I'm not trying to scare you; I'm merely giving you a gentle hint. No one wants to murder you, but some people would pay money to have you put out of business for a few weeks. If you go prowling around nights you'll be slugged, just as sure as I'm telling you. You don't wear a gun, and you couldn't use it if you did. Unless you've acquired the knowledge recently, you don't know the first thing about taking care of yourself in a row. Anyway, you wouldn't get the chance. Now, you take my tip, and keep off the dark streets, or else leave town. That's what I came to say."

Shea was startled, but he could not doubt Sam's bona fides. He was a man of the pen and the typewriter. The thought of a brutal assault made him shiver inwardly. But for all that, the idea of abandoning his post never crossed his mind.

"I'll be careful, if you say so," he observed. A thought struck him. "Pshaw, Sam, somebody's been stringing you! Why, man alive, a bit of thuggery like that would win the election for us, hands down. Don't you see? Public sentiment wouldn't stand for it."

"Good Lord! And you call yourself a newspaper man!" said Sam disgustedly. "Why, you chump, do you suppose you'd have the telling of the story? Guess again, Fauntleroy. The chances are you'd be found in a dive by the police, taken to a hospital, where, according to the house surgeon, you'd exhibit most of the symptoms of alcoholism; and half a dozen witnesses, male and female, after their kind, would have an ironclad yarn of how much hell you raised before you fell downstairs and hurt your head. Public sentiment? You'd be up against public sentiment good and plenty. Do you hear yourself emitting a roar? I guess not. You'd make a noise like a deserted village, that's what you'd do."

Shea whistled dismally. "I guess you're right, Sam. Something like that happened to Cobban. But he roared."

"And you didn't believe his story yourself."

"Well, he used to hoist in quite a few. But it ruined him. Nobody would take his stuff signed. And he wouldn't let it go unsigned. God knows where he is now, and he was a good man. Well, on your word that it's serious I'll stay indoors nights, or keep under the arc lights."

"That's good," said Sam. "When this cruel war is over I'll take you for a moonlight excursion. By the way, how's Miss Dawson? Haven't seen her for a coon's age. Too busy."

"She's assistant city librarian now, I suppose you heard."

"Seems to me some one did mention it."

"You darned old hypocrite!"

"What's the matter now?"

"Rats!" said Shea succinctly. "Do you think it was right to boost her into that job? She thinks—bless her innocence!—that it was her college record and little writings that got it for her. Kinsley was for making some caustic comments. I had to say that she was a friend of mine and of Miss Barton's."

"Glad you people own up to some human weaknesses," Sam commented. "Now, I tell you I was dead glad of the chance to get a clever girl a job with a decent salary attachment. She's old Jeff's sister, isn't she? Well, then! And no matter which way the cat jumps in this election she's solid, for Delafosse is a friend of Miss Barton's."

"A nice rib-up," laughed Shea, his eyes dancing. "You're clever, Sam—darned if you're not! I don't believe in the principle, but personally I'm glad for Fanny's sake. I believe I would have done the same thing myself, if I had had the pull."

CHAPTER X.

As the campaign developed, it became bitter, full of personalities, charges, countercharges, recriminations. More than one meeting ended in a riot and

a wrecked hall. Partisanship gone mad, blind, unreasoning, intolerant, and obstinate, was in control. Men, ordinarily sane, level-headed, and tolerant, quarreled passionately over the merits and demerits of individuals of whom they knew nothing personally, and for whom they, in reality, cared nothing; arguments begun in coolness ended in heated controversy and estrangement of friends. The newspapers, abandoning the high position of impartial critics and advisers which they maintained, or pretended to maintain, at other times, came out flatly as party organs, and fired daily broadsides at the candidates and at each other.

But the factional strife was the bitterest between Fox's supporters and his quondam supporters. It amounted to internecine war. And it became evident that old Sam Fox was to have the fight of his life.

His weakness was that of any leader who has had a long lease of power. And the sum is very simple, for long power demands firm rule; and firm rule, whether for good or evil, begets enemies within as well as without. Fox's specific trouble was that he could not, or had not, always given his friends all they wanted. And when he had refused he had done so without reasons. Not that stating them would have made much difference. In other words, there had not been enough good things to go around and keep going around, and for one man satisfied half a dozen were sore. Also, the satisfied man, having attained his object, was at no pains to pay in further service for what he had already received. And the disaffected, having found leaders, joined in revolt.

A further weakness was that he had underestimated this weakness. Long success had begotten belief in continued success. Unconsciously, but as firmly as any monarch of old France, he believed in his own right to govern; but nevertheless he did not close his eyes and ears. Convinced that there was a fight to be fought, he went halfway to meet it.

Straightway he set his political machine humming, discovering that it did not work as smoothly as of old. There were parts lacking, important parts, bits of gear and transmission hard to replace. He was driven to hurried adjustments, jury rigs, in nautical parlance, and he made these at once, as best he could, with the skill of a master mechanic, until the wheels turned again. And if, now and then, there was a grinding, a jar, a bit of unwelcome vibration, that could be attended to later.

He was far too shrewd a campaigner to waste time bidding for a vote which he could not possibly get. Certain men, certain classes, certain sections of the city he marked as definitely against him, and paid no more attention to them; they were dead ones. He concentrated his resources on the remainder. His headquarters was an exchange, a political clearing house, open almost night and day, in which the vote was sorted, catalogued, and filed. The hopelessly adverse and the certainly loyal were the goats and the sheep, divided left and right, and allowed to stand by themselves. But the mass—the maverick, unbranded vote—was worked on by a small army.

As the culling out proceeded, signs of Delafosse's wide popularity became increasingly plain, and his strength developed in unexpected quarters. His meetings were crowded, and his speeches cheered to the echo. It was evident, too, that his ticket was receiving the solid support of the Citizens' League. The split which had been predicted there failed to occur.

Delafosse was a most effective speaker. Eloquent when he chose, he affected straightforward, simple statement, reserving his powers for his perorations. Then, he loved to bring the crowd to its feet, stamping, cheering, waving hats wildly in the air. His own power, exercised heretofore only before a jury, fascinated him; but he repressed his inclination to play to the gallery. Only once, at his greatest meeting, held in a theater, did he let himself go. The bank of faces rising from his feet to the remote roof intoxicated him, and he knew that somewhere

in that vast audience was Beth Barton. She had told him she would be there. His eyes searched for her vainly, but his speech that night was such as had never before been heard in the city.

Beth, invisible, at the back of an upper box, beside her brother, listened intently, hanging on his words. They were her own half-formed thoughts and ideals crystallized, put into gloriously apt phrases, such as she could never attain. She looked from the solitary, erect figure on the stage to the crowd; saw it sway at his gestures, with the sweep of his arm; heard it sigh as he concluded; felt the instant of deep, absolute silence preceding the wild roar of applause that acclaimed its new leader.

"It was grand, glorious!" she said to her brother on their way home. "I never heard such a speech in my life—never."

"Huh!" said Billy.

"Didn't you like it?" she asked, amazed.

"Oh, it was all right, I guess," said young Barton. "He's a spellbinder, safe enough. Too much hot air for mine, though."

"Oh, Billy, you Philistine!" she cried. "Hot air? Why, it was pure eloquence. They were the very thoughts, put into words, that I've dreamed myself."

Billy grinned. "Made a hit with you, I guess. Do I get him for a brother, sister?"

Beth blushed furiously in the darkness. "Don't be vulgar!" she retorted tartly.

"Well, now I'll tell you what I think," said young Barton. "He was trying for a record to-night. The crowd was there, and with him, and he was *it*. He got away to a good start, and kept advancing the spark, and he certainly was going some, I must admit. Did you see father pounding his hands together? But I'd like to know what old Michael Jawn Halloran was thinking. So far as I've sized up my esteemed employer, he isn't strong for the uplift."

"He is working with father and Mr. Delafosse," said Beth.

"That's all right," said Billy enigmatically. Abruptly he changed the subject: "I heard young Sam Fox speak last night."

"I didn't know there was a meeting," said Beth. "Where was it?"

"Oh, just downtown," said Billy, a little confused.

"Whereabouts downtown?"

"Now, don't give me away, sis," the boy pleaded; "it was back of Dominic Blake's place."

"Blake's? That's a saloon."

"Well, this wasn't in the saloon. It was back of it, in a big room, where Professor Costigan has his boxing classes. Anyway, there were a couple of six-round goes, and the room was full of sports. There was Matty Donovan, and Jerry Pratt, the fighter, and Hoobin, the hammer thrower, and Doctor Johns, and a lot more. After the bouts, they called on Fox for a speech."

Beth's lip curled. "I don't think I could imagine Mr. Delafosse making a speech in such a place."

"He couldn't have held 'em five minutes on the stuff he sprang to-night," said Billy. "But Sam—oh, everybody calls him 'Sam'—just handed out a bunch of corking good stories, and jollied everybody along, and never mentioned politics until they made him. Then he asked if anybody there had any kick at the way the city had been run, and nobody had. 'Well, then,' says Sam, 'I guess we are all going to vote the same way, boys, so what's the use?' And they just *hollered!* After that, he put on the gloves with Costigan, and held him easy. And when it was all over he came up to me and asked after you and the folks, and said he was coming up some night, as soon as he had time."

"He seems to have time for other things," said Beth; and immediately regretted the words, for Billy cocked a curious eye at her.

"Pshaw, sis!" said he. "Don't you see that he's doing the best kind of work for his old man? He's in solid with the careless bunch. He and Mat Donovan are working the glad-hand game to a fare-ye-well."

Billy's diagnosis was exactly correct. Sam and Matty were out catching votes, and in the process they were burning the candle at both ends. They got scarcely any rest or sleep. The dim dawns saw them going home; but at the beginning of the working day they were on deck, apparently as fresh as paint, and very much on the job.

At this time the *Examiner* delivered a particularly vicious attack, its base a specific charge of corruption involving certain members of the council and a paving company, and, by implication, the elder Fox. It was, in fact, the joint product of Kinsley and Shea, and the former had overruled his subordinate's tendency to confine himself to facts, strengthening the weak spots in their case by the simple but libelous method of plain assertion. The result was a startling, but effective, bit of free-hand work. It created a sensation, and it accentuated the bitterness of feeling.

So far the bodily paths of the Foxes and Delafosse had not crossed. But on the afternoon following the publication of the *Examiner's* article, father and son, coming from a conference with Soper, in his office at the city hall, came upon him in the corridor. Before him, barring his way, stood a man named Sowerby, a stanch supporter of one of the members of the council accused by the *Examiner*. Sowerby was three parts drunk, and his remarks consisted mainly of epithets. Delafosse was quite calm under the abuse, but a red spot stood out on either cheek bone—with him, a sure sign that his temper was running out to the last few links.

"That's enough!" he snapped, as they came within earshot. "I won't take another word from you. Get out of my way!"

Sowerby made an ineffectual, wild blow, at the same time calling him a name of utter vileness.

Delafosse swayed back from the hips, missing the swing, took a swift, tiger-like step forward, and hit as he came. It was very finished, very workmanlike, and proved beyond a doubt that he had been there before. Sowerby's head hit the tessellated floor, where he lay, half stunned, staring up in ludicrous, stupid wonder.

Young Sam laughed. "What's the trouble?" he asked genially.

"I'm giving one of your heelers a lesson in decency," rasped Delafosse.

Sam's eyes grew cold at his tone. "Find it pretty easy to teach a drunk, I suppose?" he commented.

"That's a detail," Delafosse retorted. "I'm a fairly efficient instructor, Fox."

Sowerby rose unsteadily, and made a staggering rush. Delafosse waited, his hands ready. Sam caught Sowerby, and shook him until the loose change in his pockets rattled.

"Quit it, you fool," he gritted, "or I'll break your neck!"

"That's right," sneered Delafosse, "keep order among your dogs."

Sam slung the unlucky Sowerby back against the wall.

"Look here, Delafosse," said he. "You'll cut out remarks of that kind. I won't stand for them."

"I will say," said Delafosse deliberately, for he was in a black rage, "exactly what I please. Is that clear?"

"I think I get you," said Sam, with a smile of provoking mockery. "But if you'd like to elaborate the statement, go ahead."

"If you think," said Delafosse, "that I am a man to be intimidated by threatening letters, or by drunken thugs, you are very much mistaken."

Sam and his father looked at each other.

"What's that? Threatening letters!" said the latter. "This is the first I've heard of them."

Delafosse smiled incredulously. "I know you, Fox!"

"And I know you, Delafosse," said the old boss quietly. "I know a whole lot about you that you wish I didn't."

"You are at liberty to use any knowledge you have," challenged Delafosse.

"The bluff goes, and we both know why," said Fox evenly. "Get back to those letters. I tell you I don't know anything about them."

"That's a lie!" said Delafosse flatly.

"And that's rude!" young Sam put in. "Have a little respect for age, Dela-

fosse. It strikes me you need a lesson yourself. Like this!"

Before his father could intervene, he had slapped Delafosse, open-handed, across the mouth. The next instant, the scandalized main corridor of the city hall saw the beginning of a first-class bare-knuckle event.

But the noise attracted the occupants of offices. Fox grasped his son about the waist, and dragged him back. Others held Delafosse. Both combatants suddenly realized the utter folly of their actions.

Outside, Fox rated his son soundly. "You infernal young fool, haven't you got any sense?" he growled. "What in thunder did you want to mix it with him for? A nice mess! It will make votes for him."

"I couldn't stand for his calling you a liar," said Sam.

"I've been called worse, and it hasn't hurt me," said Fox. "I'm quite able to look after myself yet." But nevertheless he could not help being a little proud of his boy's swift resentment of Delafosse's words. "You don't know anything about those letters, do you?" he queried.

"Not a thing," said Sam. "But what do you know about Delafosse?"

"I was bluffing," said his father.

"Of course," said Sam reflectively, "I *am* more than six years old."

"That's so. I apologize," said Fox. "Well, then, Sam, if it would have helped any I would have told you before. I can't use it, and I wouldn't if I could."

CHAPTER XI.

Naturally the affray at the city hall was given front-page display. According to the *Examiner,* Delafosse had been attacked by a drunken thug, had floored him, and had then been set upon by the Foxes, father and son. It was an outrage, showing the desperation of the machine and its leaders.

Barton, entering his home, waved the *Examiner* like a banner at his family, pointing to the clamorous type. It was an outrage, a scandal, a bit of thuggery. A citizen who dared to oppose these scoundrels took his life in his hand; it showed plainly what desperate ruffians they were.

Beth read in pained astonishment. She recoiled instinctively from violence, from brutality. She disliked even to read of it. And, having read, she could not reconcile the account with her estimate of Fox.

But Billy brought home the *Record.* "Say—have you seen this?" he cried. "I'll bet Sam Fox trimmed him. I wish I'd seen it! Delafosse better keep away from Sam, or he'll get his."

For the readers of the *Record* learned that Delafosse, without provocation, had assaulted a gentleman who had ventured to remonstrate with him on the policy of vilification pursued by a certain newspaper. The younger Fox had intervened, and had effectually defended himself against a furious attack.

The elder Barton snorted as he glanced at the *Record* man's brilliant fiction.

"A pack of lies! A dirty rag! A poisonous, saffron sheet!" he vociferated, throwing it from him in contempt. "They can't tell the truth. They don't know what the truth is. Why, you can tell by reading it that it's a dastardly fabrication from beginning to end."

Beth was more puzzled than ever. She could not reconcile the *Record's* story with what she knew of Delafosse. That she had misread one of the men was possible, but that she had failed to read either was improbable. Somewhere between the two accounts must lie the truth.

As luck would have it, she met Fox the next day upon the street. She thought he looked tired—or dissipated. His eyes had lost some of their clearness, and dark circles were beginning to show beneath them. But his step was as alert and springy and the set of his shoulders as jaunty as ever.

He raised his hat, but hesitated an instant before he turned and walked with her, stealing a few moments from the business he had in hand.

"You look," she said, "as though you hadn't been in bed for a week."

"As bad as that? I feel as though it were a month. When this is over, I'll do an impersonation of old Rip Van Winkle. But you make up the general average. I can't begin to describe how rested, and bright, and wholesome you look."

"One might think I was a breakfast food."

"Well, you would be a desirable adjunct to a breakfast table," he said daringly.

"Like coffee and eggs?" she queried, with pretended density.

"Like roses—June roses—with the bloom, and the dew, and the first kiss of the sun on them," he replied.

She was amazed. This was not the sort of speech she expected from Sam Fox, who seemed sunk in materialism; and it would have gone better with moonlight and a secluded, tree-shadowed path than with granolithic and asphalt and the clang of trolley gongs. She was not displeased, but perversely she tried to appear so.

"I don't care for empty compliments, Mr. Fox."

"Of course not. But this isn't empty. It isn't even a compliment. It is merely an apt comparison."

"Apt?"

"Apt."

An acquaintance, passing, raised his hat; also, she thought that he raised his eyebrows. Suddenly she remembered that Fox was notorious for the moment because of the incident of the day before.

"You must not come any farther," she said. "I know you are very busy."

He glanced at her sharply. "This is so sudden! Why am I dismissed?"

"It's not that."

"My perceptive faculties are in good working order," he observed. "You don't want to be seen with me. Why? Is it those fool newspaper yarns of my row with Delafosse?"

She flushed with vexation, not unmixed with shame. In her own eyes she seemed poor, cheap, ungrateful. So, she thought, she must appear in his. It cost her an effort to tell the truth:

"Yes, it is. I don't suppose you can understand how I feel—how any girl would feel. You are a little—well, a public character just now. But don't think I believed all I read."

"The newspapers, like the rest of us, are all party mad," he said gravely. "Not one of them told the truth about that incident. Would it help if I told it to you?"

She nodded. "I think I should like to know."

He told her what had occurred.

"Then the newspapers——"

"The newspapers," he said, "did what they are paid to do. They twisted the incident for party purposes——"

"But the *Examiner!* Did Mr. Shea know the truth? Isn't he your friend?"

"Barney doesn't own the *Examiner.* I don't know whether he knew the facts or not. Anyway, he didn't write the story."

"You will contradict it?"

"Not on a bet!" said Sam. "No sensible man enters a controversy with a newspaper. It always has the last word. You don't notice Delafosse disputing the *Record's* version."

It came to Beth with a little shock that her preconceived ideas of the press, too, needed reconstructing. She had owned a primitive belief in its regard for truth, in its desire for fairness. She had thought of it mostly as a disseminator of news, an educator of the masses; but never as a tyrant. Of course, it had its black sheep, its journalistic Captain Kidds. But, in the main, she had believed it honest.

And yet here were two reputable journals publishing utterly diverse accounts of one incident; and both accounts, according to one who certainly knew, and did not spare himself in the telling, were utterly and willfully false. More than that, the men who were misrepresented, whose reputations must suffer, considered endurance a lesser evil than protest.

"Will you never have done shattering my ideals?" she said. "Can't one believe anything? I thought that the newspapers stated the facts, and expressed honest opinions."

"Only when they are allowed to,"

he replied. "Most of the press—periodicals, news dailies, trade journals—is controlled by one interest or another. When a publication announces its independence it is merely reminding somebody that it has been overlooked. And yet the papers state the facts, and express honest opinions, as to the majority of things. It is only when the holy interest—political, financial, personal—is attacked that they fall from grace."

"I can understand that," she told him. "It's very like human nature. We have our tender points. Still, I can't understand how an honest newspaper man can write what is against his convictions."

"Newspaper men, as a class, are not burdened by abstract convictions," said Fox. "A man sells his ability to write readable stuff. His work must conform to the general editorial policy of his paper. That's understood; that's fair. If he doesn't like it, he can hunt up a paper with a different policy. But the fact is that men swap about from the staff of one paper to another, in the same town, and write to order with each change. You see, knowledge of a city, its people, its inside history, is a newspaper man's asset. It takes time to acquire. That's why, outside of specialists, the newspaper business is as much a local one as law, or medicine, or groceries."

"I never thought of it in that way," she admitted. "I dare say you are right. But how can a man write convincingly if he doesn't believe what he is writing?"

"Because his salary depends on it," said Fox. "It's a poor side that hasn't got an argument. And, then, each paper has its regular readers, who are convinced already, and merely like to be told that they are right."

"Who controls the *Examiner?*" she asked abruptly.

He hesitated for a moment. "Kinsley, your father, half a dozen other leading men."

"And the *Record?*"

He smiled whimsically. "That would be telling tales. Confidentially, my father and his friends are behind it."

"So that if you went to the *Record* and Mr. Delafosse went to the *Examiner,* this matter might be set straight?"

"No, for neither paper would stultify itself. Besides, it isn't worth while."

"Not worth while to have the truth known?"

"Not a bit worth while. Neither Delafosse nor myself care particularly what the papers say."

She changed her line of endeavor: "You are both friends of mine. Now you have quarreled. Can't you make it up?"

"Why—no, I don't think so," said Sam slowly. "I haven't any great animosity, but I don't covet Mr. Delafosse's friendship."

"I am sorry," she said. "It will be awkward—if you meet anywhere, I mean."

"At your home, for instance? Oh, I think we should behave like civilized beings."

She was reminded of a grievance which she had cherished against him. "It is so long since you have been there that I have really ceased to expect you."

"I haven't had time—honestly, I haven't."

"Mr. Delafosse has had time."

Instantly she would have given worlds to recall the words. How utterly cheap and gauche they were. She, the dignified Miss Barton, stooping to phrase worthy only of a piqued waitress! She reddened with self-contempt, with mortification.

"Then he's luckier than I am," said Sam. "I just couldn't take an evening off. And I wanted to—the Lord knows I wanted to—for one particular reason." He hesitated for an instant. "You see, I wanted to ask you to marry me."

She stopped short, staring at him in amazement.

"To—to marry you!"

"Yes. Suppose we keep on walking? I thought I might as well tell you."

She walked on obediently, dazedly. It was her first proposal of marriage. She had had her dreams of this moment long before she had known Fox. But never had she dreamed of such a setting. The lights had always been

subdued, the stage empty, save for herself and another. There had been twilight, or moonlight, or firelight, whispering night breezes, the soft lip-lap of quiet waters on a shore, velvety skies and bright stars, the scent of flowers—all the paraphernalia of conventional romance. The mental stages which she had set had run the gamut from an ocean liner to a country lane. But surely never since the world began had such a question been asked to an accompaniment of trolley gongs, rumbling drays, auto horns, and strident cries of the latest editions.

She felt that she was being defrauded of her rights. The romance of her dreams was absent; the great moment was slipping by prosaically. She glanced at the young man beside her. Again romance failed. He was big and well dressed, and he interposed his formidable bulk between her and the crowd; but as an ardent lover he was just then not even an imitation. And she? She was by no means the fluttered maiden in soft draperies, holding a man's happiness in her hands. She was merely a composed young woman in street dress, very much astonished, but quite calm. The situation had no flavor; it was disappointing. Once more he had overthrown an ideal and smeared it with the dust of the commonplace.

"Yes," he repeated, "I thought I might as well tell you."

"Oh, I suppose so," she said helplessly. "I suppose it was just as well. But—but such a time! Such a place! I—I never heard of such a thing!"

"I know, I know," he admitted. "I don't like it myself. But then, you see, I'm so busy."

"Oh, busy!" she scoffed indignantly, and then laughed, for the ludicrous side of the situation was beginning to come through. She reverted to the language of childhood: "I think you're *mean!*"

"Mean! Why? What for?" he asked.

"Don't you understand that a girl isn't a quick lunch? A—a proposal is a serious matter to her, whether she has any intention of accepting it or not. She demands a man's undivided attention. It's her right. And you ask me—here, on the street—to marry you. I won't *be* proposed to in that way, Mr. Fox. It's not decent! What made you do it?"

"Delafosse," said Sam. "You see, I didn't want him to beat me to it. And when you said he had found time to call around, it made up my mind. Do you feel like giving me an answer now?"

Brought squarely to the mark, she became confused, embarrassed. "No, not now. We—I, why, we don't really *know* each other. I never thought of it. Why can't we go on as we have been?"

"Not a chance of it," Sam told her emphatically. "I've shown my hand now. Tell me this: I'm not too late?"

"N-no," she hesitated. "Mr. Delafosse hasn't—that is, I haven't——" She broke off in red confusion, conscious that she had given the case completely away. What right had he to question her? And why, in the name of all that was dignified and decorous, did she find herself forced to answer him?

"That's good enough," said Sam. "If I haven't beaten him to it, at least I've got in my bid in time. I'll come for my answer when the election is over. Good-by—Beth!"

He raised his hat, turned, and plunged into the entrance of an office building. Beth, bewildered at this cavalier leave-taking, simply stood and stared after him.

"Well," she said to herself, "this is the—the limit! What a way! On the street, too! Of course, it spared me the necessity of telling him that it was impossible." She walked on, her brow puckered in an endeavor to recall something. "No, he didn't—I'm sure he didn't—positively, he never even said that he loved me!"

CHAPTER XII.

Into the private office of old Sam Fox scuttled that alderman named Steiner. Mr. Steiner was pale and agitated, and the network of red veins beneath his skin showed blotchily. A pulse was

beating at his temples, and his management of his cigar was almost amateurish, because his hands were trembling.

"Say, Fox, I want to see you," he announced, and his voice, usually a rumbling, intimidating bass, quavered and cracked in the middle. "I got something to tell you—something important."

Fox, who was dictating private memoranda to Miss Neale, and was much displeased at the interruption, looked at him sharply.

"In half an hour," he said. "I'm busy."

"But I got to see you now," Steiner insisted. "I *got* to! It won't keep, I tell you."

Miss Neale, catching her employer's eye, closed her book, and left the room.

"Now then," said Fox, "what's the matter with you, Steiner? You look scared to death."

"I got a right to be," Steiner rejoined. "It's letters—letters of mine. Dreen has 'em. If I don't withdraw he'll publish 'em."

"Go on!" Fox ordered harshly. "What are the letters? What's in them? Who are they to?"

Steiner stammered his explanation. He had written the letters two years before to a contractor named Jordan, since dead. The first letter had offered him the award of a certain contract for a certain sum. Jordan, who was out of the city at the time, had replied guardedly that the amount was excessive. Then Steiner had perpetrated a piece of insane folly. He had explained, in another letter, that this rake-off was not all velvet, because he would have to divide it with others; and, to make the letter quite convincing, he had given names and the sum necessary to square each. These letters were now in the possession of Dreen, who was Delafosse's candidate in Steiner's ward.

"You wrote a letter like that—wrote it and signed it!" thundered Fox. "Were you crazy, or what?"

"I was full," Steiner quavered. "I needed the money bad. I'd done business with Jordan before, and I knew he was all right. I thought he'd burn the letters. I told him to. I thought——"

"No, you didn't!" snapped Fox. "You couldn't, you haven't the machinery in your loft. You idiot! Well, and Jordan got that contract. I know he did. I remember it. I thought some of you were grafting at the time, but it was none of my business. What names did you mention?"

Steiner told him, and Fox's was among them.

"You used my name—mine!" roared Fox. "And you knew you didn't have to split one dollar with me. You never had to. You plain, common liar! Why?"

"I thought he'd shake down for more if I told him that," Steiner confessed. "And I had to split with one or two, anyway."

"You're a cute fool, aren't you? And you fixed the others yourself, I suppose, so that can't be proved."

"I don't know if it can't," Steiner confessed. "I don't know what got into me. Jordan sent me a check——"

Fox sprang from his chair with an oath, and sat down again heavily.

"A check!" he cried. "A check for the whole thing—and you took it and cashed it, and spraddled it out yourself among the others. Dreen has your letter naming the amount you want, and there's a dead check for a corresponding amount, indorsed by you, in existence somewhere. Go ahead. Make it strong while you're at it. Has Dreen got that check, too?"

Steiner nodded, almost whimpering. "I needed the money; I needed it right away. Jordan had gone out of town, and I had to have it right then. I knew he was all right. What did he want to die for? Who'd 'a' thought——"

"Shut up!" rasped Fox. "Stop whining, can't you? If I have to do your thinking for you, stay choked while I'm doing it."

He paced the floor, chewing an unlighted cigar savagely. Presently he paused.

"Steiner," he said, "I haven't got time to tell you what I think of you. But from now on you're a dead one. No man who makes a break like yours is any good to me. So I'm going to drop you now, and let Dreen carry the

ward. You'll do what he wants you to do, and bring the letters and check to me."

"Guess again," said Steiner sullenly. "Dreen won't give them up. If I drop out, he'll simply not 'use' them."

"How do you know he won't use them?"

"He said he wouldn't."

Fox made an impatient gesture. "I know Dreen. How will he use them if he does use them?"

"He'll hand them over to that fellow Shea, on the *Examiner*."

"Did he say so? Did he mention Shea's name? Don't make any mistake, now."

"I ain't apt to make a mistake about it," said Steiner. "That's what he said. If I conclude to deal, I'm to let him know before ten o'clock to-night."

"Where?"

"At his house."

"Well, you're not going," said Fox, "and I guess you won't withdraw, either. We'll just stand pat. I've reconsidered."

"But he'll do as he said—he'll publish the letters!" cried Steiner, in a panic. "He's got the goods. It means the pen for me, unless I skip out."

"You knew that when you wrote the letters," said Fox unsympathetically. "You knew it when you started to graft."

"Everybody does it," said Steiner miserably. "It's hard on me to be picked out——"

"You picked yourself out," Fox interrupted coldly. "Now, listen to me: Go out and take two drinks—big ones—to stiffen your nerve. Mind, no more! Then you stand your hand. Go around, show yourself to the boys, be with somebody every minute from now till two or three in the morning—understand?"

"I can't let it come to a show-down," Steiner protested brokenly. "I can't, I tell you, Fox. I'm a married man, and my kids are going to school. Could I stand to have them see the other kids point fingers and whisper? I've got to take a chance on Dreen. He won't shove the knife into me if he gets what he wants."

"Maybe he won't, but I will," said Fox. "You're taking orders from me—understand, Steiner? You do as I say, or I'll break you in little bits. Don't you worry about Dreen. He'll never use those letters."

"What have you got on him?" asked Steiner eagerly, with returning hope.

"That's none of your business," said Fox. "All you have to do is to brace up and keep your mouth shut."

At half-past nine that night, Mr. Dreen sat smoking a very thick cigar, and contemplating with satisfaction a cap page of his own literary work, the said work being a formal withdrawal from the contest of Mr. Ab Steiner, and the unqualified indorsement of Mr. Dreen in his stead. The instrument bore no signature, nor was it intended to bear one, being merely a draft. Mr. Dreen, who was very thorough, intended to obtain not simply an autograph, but a holograph, from Mr. Steiner. He had no doubt whatever that he would obtain it, for he had, in popular phrase, "put the fear of God" into that gentleman's heart that very afternoon, and he expected him at any moment.

At nine-forty-five he became restless, and, going to the window, peered out into the street. The night was dark, and the street lights made small headway against it. Mr. Dreen made a mental note to have a Tungsten installed in front of his own house after the election, and then canceled the note for prudential reasons connected with the time and manner of his home-comings.

At ten o'clock, Steiner had not arrived, and Mr. Dreen swore. He had named the hour, and most explicitly stated what would happen if Steiner did not come; and yet Steiner had not come. After consideration, he set his watch back half an hour—for he was very thorough—and waited. He waited for half an hour, then rose heavily.

"Thinks he'll hold out on me, does he?" he muttered. "Thinks I was bluffing, hey! Well, I'll learn him!"

Mr. Dreen's English might have been somewhat infirm, but his purpose was not. He rang up the *Examiner* office, and demanded Shea.

"This is Dreen," he said. "You know what I was speaking to you about? Well, it's all right. I've got the papers. Can you come and get them? Hey? No, I can't come very well. My wife's sick. It's a sensation, I tell you. The real goods! All right, I'll expect you right away."

While he waited, he burned the useless draft of Steiner's withdrawal, for he was very thorough.

He let Shea in himself. Shea read Steiner's two letters, and looked at the paid check, and his eyes snapped.

"What a fool! What an infernal fool!" he muttered.

"Wasn't he?" said Dreen. "I guess they can't go back of that evidence."

"How did you get it? When? Where? How long have you had it?" Shea shot at him.

"Does that matter?"

"It's about the first question you'll be asked—the first we'll be asked."

"Well, Jordan gave them to a man who gave them to me," said Dreen, after a little hesitation. "I'll tell you some other time. You've got the papers—that's the main thing, I guess."

Shea compared the signatures with the indorsement on the check. They were genuine, no doubt of it.

"We'll run it, and leave your name out," said he. "Of course, there'll be an inquiry, and you'll have to testify; but that's not our business." He looked at his watch, and shoved the papers into an inner pocket. "I'll have to hurry if we're to use this. I wish you had let me have the story earlier. I'd like more time to it. It will be the sensation of the campaign. Good night, Mr. Dreen. You'll see this to-morrow morning."

But when, early next morning, Mr. Dreen himself opened his door and picked up the *Examiner* from the front steps, he did not see it; nor did he see any reference to it. He swore angrily, and rang up the *Examiner* office. Naturally Shea was not there, and the man at the other end of the line was curt with the curtness of lack of sleep and an empty stomach. Later, much later, still failing to find Shea, he got Kinsley on the phone.

"I don't know where he is," snapped Kinsley, whose nerves were beginning to feel the tension of the campaign. "He hasn't shown up this morning. What do you want him for?"

The matter was too delicate to discuss on the wire, and Dreen went to the *Examiner* office. A messenger sent to Shea's address was told that he was not there—more, he had not been home that night.

Dreen began to express his opinion. Kinsley cut him short:

"He doesn't booze. Who knew he had those papers?"

"Not a soul," Dreen replied. For obvious reasons, he could not mention the abortive deal with Steiner, and he had quite forgotten that he had mentioned Shea's name to the latter. "He didn't know what they were till he saw them in my house."

"Who knew you had them? Did Steiner know? Did Fox know?"

"Steiner may have guessed it from something I said," Dreen evaded. "Fox didn't know."

About noon, Dreen met Steiner. "You'll wish you had signed that withdrawal, Steiner," he said.

Steiner looked at him blankly.

"Withdrawal?" he echoed. "I don't know what you mean."

Kinsley had no high opinion of Dreen, but he got busy at once. The word went around that Shea was missing. Reporters, enjoined to secrecy, dashed for the hospitals, for the police stations, for the all-night stands. Two took the most direct route to Dreen's residence. They subjected vacant lots and alleys remote from street lights to a close scrutiny, but they found nothing. Barney Shea had simply disappeared.

And then Kinsley, after reflection, went to see Sam Fox, and put the matter up to him. Sam whistled and looked him between the eyes.

"And what do you think I know about it?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Kinsley. "But I think you stand a better chance of finding out than I do. Frankly, if he has been

laid out, or kidnaped, it's a cinch that some toughs among your people are responsible. Mind, I'm not reflecting on you personally. And Shea told me you were a friend of his—at one time."

"I am still," said Sam. "Barney was square with me. He even offered to throw up his job with you if I said so. So I can't kick at what he has written. If anything has happened to him I'll feel worse about it than you will. I'll make it my business to find him."

"Thanks," said Kinsley. "It's decent of you."

Sam merely nodded. "That's all right. By the way, I'd keep this out of the papers if I were you."

"Of course," said Kinsley.

Sam saw Steiner, but that gentleman held out. He knew nothing about Shea, nothing about any papers held by Dreen.

"Then somebody's lying," said Sam.

"Don't talk to me like that!" said Steiner, with dignity.

Sam surveyed him with distaste. "Why, you blamed soak," he said, "one punch would kill you." But, not having anything to go on, he went to see his father.

There were some things the elder Fox did not confide to his son, and this was one of them. Sam was baffled. He sought Matty Donovan, who was innocence itself.

"I know I tipped you that he'd get into trouble," he said, "but that was all called off—honest. These newspaper guys are a sporty bunch. Why don't you take a look round the thirst emporiums, or the Turkish baths?"

Sam regarded him critically. "I wonder if you're holding out on me, Matty?" he said. "All that I want to know is that he's safe."

"Prove it by Flynn," said Donovan, in injured tones. "You can search me."

Suspicious, but unable to look into Donovan's inmost soul, Sam let it go at that, and pursued his investigations, which yielded absolutely nothing. As a last resort, he went to see Fanny Dawson, hoping that she might be able to throw a sidelight on the matter, and finished by making a clean breast of it to her.

She could tell him nothing of Shea's probable intentions, and she was genuinely alarmed.

"You must let me know as soon as you find out anything," she insisted. "I shan't sleep a wink. I mean it literally."

"Have you a phone?"

"No, but the Reburns have. They'll give me any message."

He made a note of the number, and, acting on Matty's suggestion, went the rounds of the "thirst parlors" and Turkish baths. He cut the vermilion trails of several young bloods, but did not trouble to follow them, knowing that whatever had happened to Barney, it was not a case of plain dissipation. His inquiries of certain persons who were supposed to know the latest society gossip of the underworld gave no result. And finally, at the end of his resources, he took the case confidentially to the chief of police.

About midnight, he received a telephone call.

"We got your man," said the chief. "Better come down."

Sam went down immediately. The chief seemed ill at ease.

"Now, look here," said he, "I want to know what I'm up against in this. I don't want to touch off any dynamite, and I know there's a shot in the hole somewhere. It's up to you to show me the whole hand."

"I don't know just what you mean," said Sam. "Where is Shea, and where did you find him?"

"He's in the hospital," the chief replied. "He's full up with booze or dope, and he's had a crack on the head besides. We found him in a mighty tough joint. The way they tell it, he'd been there about twenty-four hours, drinking steady, and all at once he went crazy, and started to clean out the house with a carving knife. Then some one hit him with a chair, and knocked him out. They all tell the same story."

"They're lying," said Sam.

"Sure," the chief concurred; "but I'd hate to make a fuss if I were in Shea's

place. What I'm getting at is, who planted him there? It looks to me like it might have been some one we know. I want to be sure before I do anything. I'm not making trouble for myself and my friends. If Shea lays a charge, they'll lay one—assault with intent to kill, or something like it. It won't do him any good to make a row. If I were in his place, I'd lose pretty quiet. Now, you're a friend of his——"

"I think he'll keep quiet," said Sam. "What did he have on him, chief?"

"Watch, about twenty in bills, some chicken feed, half a dozen personal letters addressed to him. They hadn't rolled him. Too cute for that."

Sam nodded. He saw Barney's position very clearly. The papers he had received from Dreen were gone, and he had everything to lose and not much to gain by publicity.

"All right," he said, rising. "I'll go to the hospital. He'll look at it sensibly. I'll make him. Tell your men to keep it quiet."

He found Shea heavy-headed and bitterly self-reproachful, with a very hazy idea of what had occurred. He remembered leaving Dreen's house and walking a couple of blocks. Then he had been expertly sandbagged. At least, he believed so, but he had not even seen an assailant. Beyond that, the films were too poor for recognition.

Sam supplied the blanks with brutal frankness, and saw, to his relief, that Shea was inclined to be sensible.

"In the first place," he said, "you believe that I don't know who is responsible for this."

"Of course," said Shea.

"Then, I want to know what you intend to do about it."

Shea swore between his teeth.

"Nothing. What can I do? Candidly I'd like to raise seven kinds of Sheol, but I see it would break me as it broke Cobban. So I'll take my medicine."

"That's the boy!" said Sam, with satisfaction. "You'll have to tell Kinsley, of course. Then you can cook up some yarn for the *Examiner* boys. They won't believe it, but that won't matter. Which puts me in mind that I promised to advise Miss Dawson as soon as you put in an appearance. What shall I tell her?"

"How did she find out I was missing?"

"I told her myself. I was trying to pick up your trail, and I thought she might know something. Seems to set some store by you, Barney. What?"

"Oh, rot!" said Shea. "Tell her something that won't fade, but let me know what it is."

"Such trust is touching," said Sam. "Well, I'll do my best for you."

When he looked at his watch, he gave up the idea of reaching Miss Dawson by telephone. Obviously it would not do to wake up strangers in the early morning hours merely to have them deliver a message which they would not think important. He decided to put it off until after breakfast. But his route led past the apartment building, and as he passed it he looked up. One window only was lighted, and he was almost sure that one was Fanny Dawson's. It seemed that her prediction of a wakeful night was correct.

He stopped and debated with himself. All prudence urged him to go on about his business. Liking for Miss Dawson made him wish to set her mind at rest. And, backing this, was the attraction which the unconventional, the imprudent, had always held for him. He knew the location of her room very well. He was wearing shoes with rubber heels. Everybody was asleep. It would be easy to slip up, tap on her door, whisper an assurance of Barney's safety, and come away without the knowledge of any one.

He entered the building, and ascended the stairs with the confident tread of a man coming home. Only when he arrived at her floor he trod softly, catlike, with his peculiar, clinging step, letting his weight down gradually, gently at every stride.

He had made no mistake. There was a light in Miss Dawson's room. He tapped softly, not using his knuckles but the tips of his fingers. Inside there was the crackle of a page turned, a

rustle, a pause, and Miss Dawson's voice asking who was there. At his name, she opened the door. She was completely dressed in street costume.

"What is it?" she asked breathlessly. "Is it Barney? Is he——"

"He's all right," Sam assured her.

"Won't you——" She hesitated.

"No, thanks. I'm violating the proprieties as it is, but it was too late to telephone." He invented brilliantly: "You see, Barney was running down a story for his paper, and the man he wanted information from was leaving town. Barney took the same train, and hadn't time to tell anybody, and never thought to wire. That's all there is to it. He's at the office now, working on his story, and the boys are calling him Charlie Ross. You'll see him to-morrow. And now, Miss Dawson, you'd better lose no time in wooing the sandman."

"I won't," she said, with a sigh of relief. She did not see the fissures in Sam's story. To her it seemed a very natural explanation. "It is awfully good of you."

"It's awfully imprudent," he said. "Good night, Miss Dawson. The next time I call it will be at a more conventional hour."

"I'll be glad to see you," she returned. "Good night, Mr. Fox."

TO BE CONTINUED.

This story will be continued in the October Month-end issue, on sale two weeks hence, September 25th.

STUNG!

ALEXANDER M. DOCKERY, former governor of Missouri, was at one time a member of the House of Representatives, and, while filling the job, made the acquaintance of a needy young man who formed the habit of borrowing too much money. Dockery got tired of being "touched" every few days, and decided to put a stop to it.

One day he was called out of the House chamber by the borrowing friend.

"Say, Dockery," came the usual request, "can you lend me twenty?"

Dockery looked grieved and cast down, felt in all of his pockets, and nearly succeeded in squeezing out a tear from his left eye.

"I haven't got a cent," he said, in sepulchral tone.

At that moment he spied a page boy coming down the corridor—a boy who, he knew, was always hard up. The legislator saw a way of making an effective escape.

"I don't even know where I could borrow the money for you, Ben," he concluded. Turning quickly, he called the page. "Ray, my boy," he said kindly, "have you twenty dollars with you?"

The boy put his hand into a pocket. Dockery took a few steps toward the door, the would-be borrower began to mourn.

"Yes, sir," said the lad. "Here it is."

PITCHING AND PARAGRAPHING

AFTER Walter Johnson, the Washington pitcher, had "held out" for several weeks for more salary than had been offered to him originally, and had finally signed up for a fat lot of money, he proceeded to pitch one or two losing games. This was surprising, because Johnson is one of the best in the business.

George Brown, a Washington wit and paragrapher, explained the matter in these words:

"Johnson is too busy going to the bank to pitch."

Bringin' Home the Mail

By J. Edward Hungerford

COME alive thar, Cupid, ain't no call to mope,
Yere's a pictur' post card fairly oozin' hope,
Branded Philadelphy—writin' kinda blurred,
Betcher I pe-roosed it, every blessed word;
'Lows she's doin' nicely, hopes you feel the same;
Says she's kinda lonely, winds up with her name."
That's the way he greets us, ridin' down the trail,
Old Mizzoury Strothers, bringin' home the mail.

"Git to shoutin', Texas, ain't no time fer gloom,
Yere's a fragile missive, yelpin' with perfume;
Reckon it's from Jinny, labeled Cripple Crick,
Must be powerful newsy—shore is plenty thick;
What's the use uh scowlin'—figger I ain't wise?
Kain't I see the love light shinin' in yore eyes?"
That's the way he greets us, ridin' down the trail,
Old Mizzoury Strothers, bringin' home the mail.

"Git to smilin', Tucson, yere's yore maga-zine,
Drapped it in a mud hole—*tried* to git it clean;
Chuck plumb full uh love yarns, heaps uh po'try, too;
Cow-pinch on the front-piece kinda favors you;
Reckon yore plumb anxious 'bout that see-ree-al,
No use frettin', hombre—he-ro gits the gal."
That's the way he greets us, ridin' down the trail,
Old Mizzoury Strothers, bringin' home the mail.

"Gosh, yore lookin' pert, dad, nope, no word to-day—
Calkilate that missive's somewhar' on the way;
Don't you go and fret none—it's a-comin' yit;
Chillun, they is keerless—oftentimes fergit;
Jest you take this paper, yere's a pictur', too,
Uncle Sam, old-timer, ain't ignorin' you!"
That's the way he greets us, ridin' down the trail,
Old Mizzoury Strothers, bringin' home the mail.

"Item: One Hornswoggle, $15,000"

By Robert Welles Ritchie

Author of "Gibbs' Footnote to History," Etc.

There's more to prize fighting than merely getting hit and trying to hit the other fellow. Here's the story of how the "hope of the white race" had a hornswoggle put on him! What's a hornswoggle? Well, read what Bill Blood's trainer has to say about it

THERE was no unnecessary violence. Trainer Bob simply laid one hand on the slack coat collar, took a grip with the other at a certain strategic point lower down, and hurried the faded little man on the tips of his toes through the rose arbor and out under the horseshoe nailed above the gate.

Maybe Trainer Bob "gave him the boot" at that point; at any rate, while the faded little man did a spread-eagle in the dust of the road, Trainer Bob spoke:

"And you needn't come back, neither," he said. "There's nuts and bums enough round these quarters 'thout any little squirt like you buttin' in. Beat it!"

He slammed the gate, and turned back under the nodding yellow roses. The ejected person sat in the dust supinely for a minute. Then he looked at one of his hands. A rose barbed his fingers. He picked the flower out of his palm, sucked his bleeding fingers; then, with elaborate care, fixed the rose in his buttonhole.

As he did so, he smiled in a thoroughly charitable manner, picked himself up, and walked jauntily over to the car that stood at its terminus near the bathhouse.

Though the conductor gave him a sympathetic grin, the little man paid no heed. He sat down on the edge of the seat, folded his hands over his knees, and kept his eyes on the brown and snow-capped Sierras all the way back to Jay.

The need of any pen portrait of a wispy little man whose only claim to attention so far is that he had been kicked out of Bill Blood's training quarters at seven o'clock of a sparkling Nevada morning may not be apparent. Still, just for luck, one might say that he was undersized, had dyed whiskers that looked like a second-hand hearse plume, wore his hair in ringlets over his collar, and a chunk of gold quartz in his flaming ascot necktie.

If any one looked at him twice, which nobody but one of the local-color-painting correspondents from New York would, he might mark that the little man had unusual eyes. They were very deep-set and luminous, like a freshly husked buckeye. But, at that, his ensemble would set him down for a horse doctor, maybe, or a correspondence-school professor—perhaps the discoverer of Siwash Stomach Salts.

When the car came to Gold Street, in the town of Jay, the object of the above random speculations got off, and went into the Bon Ton Eating Place. There he had a plate of ham and eggs, and while his coffee cooled in its stone cup he pulled out a pencil and wrote on the back of the bill of fare this bit of correspondence.

J. BUMPUS, ESQ., Manager of Bill Blood, Pugilist.

DEAR SIR: This is to advise you that I have decided to increase the amount of the fee I have set as a preliminary to Mr. Blood's appearing in the roped arena on the fourth prox. Because of certain incidents which concerned me very personally, and which occurred at the Mungo Springs training quar-

ters this morning, I have decided that you must pay me fifteen thousand dollars instead of twelve thousand dollars (invariably in cash, of course) before I will allow your Mr. Blood, pugilist, to fulfill his contract and meet the Black Thunderbolt on the fourth prox. Remember my post-office box is No. 23.

Believe me, sir, your most obdt. servant,
THE PROFESSOR.

JAY, Nev., June 27.

The Professor—now that we have his handle—paid for his breakfast, lifted an envelope from the cashier's desk when he got his change, begged her pardon for seeming so fresh, and addressed and sealed the bill of fare on the cigar case. Then he went out to post his letter and to mingle with the joyous transients of Jay.

He mingled all day—quietly, almost deferentially. It was exhilarating, and it cost him nothing. He eddied about the roulette tables in Jim May's Palace, and felt poignantly the joys and sorrows the little marble bestowed on others, without trying so much as a white chip himself.

He watched the Petowatomice Indoor Yacht Club, of St. Louis, swarm off its Pullmans and march riotously behind a brass band up to the Golden Hotel. The roaring and guffawing of the world's congress of sporting gentlemen seemed to please him, and he smiled with innocent pleasure.

As he was standing before the blackboard in Courtlett's pool room, watching a man in shirt sleeves chalking up the numbers, a red-faced copper slapped the Professor on the shoulder, and bawled at him playfully:

"Well, who are you backing to win, doctor? Odds on the coon are creeping up."

"Who? Me?" the Professor hesitated, in a bashful way; then, with a frank smile: "Oh, I'm backing myself—to clean up fifteen thousand dollars."

That night he peeked through the glass front of Box 23 in the post office. Empty. Next morning at six o'clock he climbed on the first car to Mungo Springs.

Mornings at Jay are glorious. Tremendous vitality is in the air. The Sierras bulge out of the blue to the westward as if they were marching all in line to crush the State of Nevada; you can count each sagebush twenty miles off on their tremendous flanks. The wind brings the smell of pine and sage and alfalfa hay.

The Professor sniffed the breeze, and feasted his eyes on the mountains. A childlike happiness radiated above his dyed whiskers. When the car stopped at Mungo Springs, he did not go straightway through the gate where the horseshoe hung, but he made a detour through a thicket of willows, hopped over an irrigation ditch, and sat on his heels in the middle of a patch of raspberry bushes just back of the training cottage. The Professor's eyes lit up at what he saw.

Thirty feet away, under a great cottonwood tree, was a square-fenced platform covered with red tarpaulin, all glistening with powdered rosin. Several men in sweaters were hovering around some bulk of flesh seated in the corner. One tall, lithe man, stripped to trunks and fighting shoes, and with boxing gloves on his hands, fiddled around the platform, sparring at the tufts of down that sifted from the cottonwood overhead. A photographer fussed nervously with his black-box camera.

Other men sat tensely on benches around the stage, with notebooks on their laps, and poised pencils. There was a stir in the group about the corner, and a nearly naked brown shape stood up, slapped his thighs with gloved hands, and strode to the center of the platform to meet the boxer who waited there.

Bill Blood, the Pride of the White Race—the Abysmal Brute, the data of whose anatomy a nation knew by heart, and of whose primordial instincts novelists of the red-meat school wrote at twenty-five cents a word.

The Professor, there in the raspberry bushes, clasped his knees in ecstasy, and purred a little tune, as he watched Bill Blood pull his head down behind his shoulder and advance against his spidery sparring partner with the majesty of motion of a wild freight

car. Minutes passed, punctuated by wheezings and grunts from the rosined tarpaulin. He heard the smack of blows, cries of "Watch that right, Bill!" "Don't open yourself up like a three-ring circus!" and "Aw, Bill, quicker on that block!"

The Professor breathed a little sigh when, near the end of the twenty-minute exercise, he saw Trainer Bob leave the platform and go into the kitchen. He rose, shook the crooks out of his legs, and, with guileful innocence, left the raspberry bushes, and sidled over to join the fringe of spectators about the boxing stage.

Bill Blood walked over to a corner and sat down, with a towel over his shoulders. The Professor edged carefully over to the corner, and waited patiently for the correspondents to get through asking the champion what he had for breakfast, and how that bread basket was to-day. A minute of opportunity came when Blood sat alone and glowering over his chewing gum.

"Mr. Blood! Oh, Mr. Blood! A word with you, please!"

The fighter turned his head, and looked down into the dyed whiskers and strangely luminous eyes of the Professor.

"What you want?" he growled.

"Listen—to what—I tell you—very carefully." The Professor spoke tensely and with a peculiar clipping off of each word. Over the fringe of his dappled beard his eyes glowed as no eyes Bill Blood had even seen glow before.

"Listen, Mr. Blood"—and the pugilist's little eyes were fixed in a set stare down into those below—"you now think that prize fighting is wicked and unmanly. You know that it is. You are going to give up fighting right away; you know you are. You can't fight any more if you wanted to. Knowing that fighting is wicked, you are going to say to your manager and your trainers: 'I won't fight the Black Thunderbolt on the Fourth of July.' That's what you are going to say to them, Mr. Blood; and you are going to say it just as soon as you go in your dressing room. You know that you are going to say that. You can't help yourself. You will just have to say it. That's all, Mr. Blood."

The Professor slipped away from the stand just as Trainer Bob came down the kitchen steps. The trainer saw him wading through the raspberry bushes, and shied a rock that knocked the Professor's hat off. Undamaged, the Professor took the car back to Jay, and went to the Bon Ton Eating Place.

"I think I'd like a little iced cantaloupe," he said to the waiter, "a filet mignon aux champignons, and—ah, yes, a grapefruit salad."

"Ham and—or stewed tripe's what *you'll* get," said the waiter. "Which?"

The Professor enjoyed that day, but for certain other people in that gay city of Jay the sun did not shine unclouded. For example, there were Messrs. Kickhard and Fleecum, joint managers of this "battle of the century," that was just a week in the future.

They sat together in a stuffy little office over May's Palace, trying to formulate a plan for the distribution of one hundred and twenty-five press seats at the ringside among two hundred and thirty clamoring correspondents and special writers. Into their knotty problem burst Trainer Bob. His eyes bulged, and his mouth worked in a spasm of excitement.

"Come out! Come out to the Springs quick! That dub, Blood, has welshed!"

"He's *w-h-a-t?*" This in unison from the managers.

"Welshed, I tell you! Laid down on the fight! He's out there now in his room, reading 'Little Rollo and His Dog,' and he says it's wicked to fight. Says he won't fight on the Fourth, or any other time. Why—why, he's plumb off his bean—he's—he's——"

The joint managers were already grabbing for their hats. Their chauffeur ran his speed up to sixty, beyond the town limits.

Jim Courtlett, the ex-pug, and sparring instructor, met them at the gate. His face was funereal. Without a word, he led the fight promoters into a shaded

room. They tiptoed as if into a room of the dead. There by the window sat the champion, feet propped on a sewing machine, and a little red-backed book nearly hidden behind his two paws.

"Bill, Bill," Kickhard began tremulously, "what's this Bob tells me about your welshing on the fight?"

Not a word from the champion. He chewed his gum noisily, and turned over a leaf of his Rollo book. Kickhard strode up to the sprawling bulk by the window, and spoke again, with an attempted note of harshness:

"Looky here, Bill Blood! What's eating you? Have you laid down on your contract?"

"Leave me 'lone," grunted the heavyweight. "I've said I wasn't going to fight any more, an' I mean it. It's wicked to fight, that's what it is. It's unmanly for a big stiff like me to go around knockin' people's blocks off fer a living. I can't fight the Black Thunderbolt on the Fourth. It wouldn't be right, nor manly."

The champion, dazed by the utterance of so long a speech, looked from one manager to the other for an instant, then returned to the wild adventures of Little Rollo.

Kickhard and Fleecum stood dumb. Courtlett ventured to mumble: "Aw, Bill!" Then Kickhard began to rave. Did Bill Blood know that the promoters had sold every seat in the arena? Did he realize that sports had come and were coming from Australia and China, and England, and Hoboken to see this scrap? What would they say? Why, there'd be no hole in the ground small enough for a welsher like him to crawl into. He'd forfeit the purse; the coon would get away with the bacon without once putting up his mitts. There'd be——

"Get out o' here before I gotta beat somebody up!"

The champion had closed his book, and was taking his feet down from the sewing machine. The room emptied.

But it was a sad, sad conference—that out under the cottonwood tree. There, the governor of the State—a good sport—was coming to see Bill spar at four o'clock, and the moving-picture people were going to fill a lot of films with the governor shaking hands with Bill, Bill jumping rope, and all that feature stuff. It was in their contract. They'd make a terrible roar if the stunt wasn't pulled. Then, how about the sporting writers? Old Pop Tenny, of the *Bumblebee,* and Leghorn, of the *Earth,* who'd been giving Bill all the best of it—if a whisper of this stuff got out in the papers——

Kickhard put his head in his hands, and snuffled. Stung in Frisco; stung in Jay, and now stung by that bum, Bill Blood, himself. Oh, back to Goldfield and a quiet little faro business for him. Courtlett tried to urge optimism. This was nothing but one of old Bill's spells. "Yunno, he gets 'em like this when he's training. He'll come out of it."

Trainer Bob was speculative. He'd seen a mangy little shrimp hanging around training quarters. He'd kicked the runt out two days in succession. Maybe the little guy had put the bee on Bill—given him the Hebrew sign. Who knows? Then, how about those letters signed "Professor" which Bumpus had got—those holdup letters, trying to mace Bumpus for twelve thousand dollars? Trainer Bob thought there was something doing there.

"Oh, bosh! Just some bug wants to get his name in the papers," was Fleecum's answer.

"Hello, boys! Why the gloom?" The ruddy face of old Pop Tenny rounded the corner of the house. Kickhard gasped; Courtlett groaned.

"Oh, nothing, Pop; just chewing over a little matter of costs." Courtlett was the quickest to recover balance.

"Yes, carpenters framing up a strike for higher pay on the arena," Kickhard put in lamely. But the intuition of the veteran sporting reporter would not be bluffed.

"Come on, man, wise me up," he said seriously. "Where's Bill?"

Kickhard and Fleecum fled to their automobile. Winging through the sagebrush on the way back to town, they conferred in monosyllables. They had

their chauffeur take them to Doctor Slattery's office. They knew the doctor to be "right."

Afternoon came, and with it the crowds at Mungo Springs, the moving-picture men, and the governor. Kickhard escorted the executive out to the training quarters in one machine. Fleecum took Doctor Slattery in another.

When they got there, all of the two hundred and thirty correspondents, including the Englishman and the Frenchman, were ringed around Bill Blood's vacant armchair on the lawn. A photographer had his moving-picture camera already straddling the ridgepole of the house. Indians and Chinamen were on the fringe of the crowd of the unelect pressing against the fence.

The promoters had been hoping against hope all the way out to the Springs. They dove into the house, with Doctor Slattery gripped between them. Courtlett entertained the governor with funny stories on the porch.

Why relate the painful scene that was enacted in the quiet inner room, where sat the champion with his Rollo? It was but a repetition of what had happened in the morning.

Courtlett had descended to dialect tales, and his hat band was dripping when the promoters and the doctor came out. The correspondents and the ex-champs on the grass were murmuring. The promoters and the doctor pushed through the crowd to the resined platform under the cottonwood.

Kickhard ascended the platform, and removed his hat.

"Ladies and gentlemen," the correspondents frantically sought their pads and pencils, "we are sorry to disappoint you, but Mr. Blood will not appear to spar on this platform this afternoon. In order that you may not be unduly alarmed and spread sensational report of this really trifling incident, I have asked Doctor Slattery, here, who has just completed an examination of Mr. Blood, to tell you just why we think it best that he should remain quiet to-day. Doctor Slattery, ladies and gentlemen."

The doctor removed his sombrero, and spoke:

"A very trifling matter, as Mr. Kickhard says, and one that could well be overlooked in anybody but a man so prominent in the public eye as the undefeated champion is at present. Fact is, Mr. Blood is overtrained, that's all. His reflexes are a little dulled, and he evidences slight neurotic symptoms that——"

"Hey, doc! Spell that Nooratic lady's name. I never met her," called a special writer with a cauliflower ear.

A great laugh snapped the tension, and the crowd dissolved. All but old Pop Tenny. He went up to Courtlett and Bumpus, the champ's manager, crooked a finger in the waistband of each, and said, very low:

"Out with it, boys! It's got to come out sooner or later, and you can trust me from hell to breakfast. Bill's welshed, eh?"

It was just at that minute that a little man with calico whiskers and a lump of quartz in his necktie was standing by the crowded bar of the Golden Hotel, listening with a timid smile flitting under his eyes to the vociferous arguments of a group beside him.

"I tell you, I give that coon just ten rounds; that for the moving pictures—then, bingo!—to dreamland for his!"

"You're right. Bill Blood's a bear," another put in, "but slow—slow as a freight train. It'll be a long fight, I'm telling you, and——"

"Gentlemen, excuse me," the smiling little man moved into the group. "I think you'll be interested to hear that there—won't—be—any—fight."

"There—*what?*"

"No, gentlemen; I think I have it pretty straight that Mr. Blood has decided not to fight. Ask his manager; ask the two promoters."

That was all. The seed was sown. The Professor lost himself in the crowd.

Within an hour, Jay was seething. Those who came back from Mungo Springs caught the rumor before they were off the car step, and were pounding back into the country again in five

minutes. Automobiles were conjured at bonanza prices, and the young night was slashed with roving headlight beams. The telegraph office was a bedlam; only thirty wires, and a mob of frantic correspondents battling at the doors.

The little marbles in the roulette wells were silent for the first time in ten days. Bars were deserted. The office of the promoters was stormed; they were not to be found. Officers of the State constabulary had to ride their mounts onto the floor of Courtlett's pool room to break up a fight which started with the manager's refusal to refund money bet.

"Bill's welshed!" "Bill's laid down!" Jay reëchoed the moan from railroad to river.

And the Professor took a little squint through the glass front of Box 23.

Nothing there. But there was something for the Professor, after all. That was a hand of iron that closed on his shoulder like a pipe wrench.

"I guess we'll have a little talk together," said a voice over his shoulder.

The Professor screwed his head around, and looked up into the very menacing eyes of Trainer Bob.

"You come along with me, Box Twenty-three," the trainer continued, as his fingers massaged the Professor's clavicle. "There's some things we may find interesting to talk about."

The Professor merely smiled, and nodded assent. They got into a waiting automobile, and streaked through the dark to Mungo Springs. The road outside the cottage swarmed with sports. Trainer Bob clove a path, and dragged the Professor after him. They entered a lamp-lit room, where sat Courtlett, the promoters, Manager Bumpus, and two sparring instructors. They were ranged stiffly and uncomfortably around the walls, in wake formation.

"Here's the little squirt I was telling all you about," was Trainer Bob's introduction, as he pushed the Professor into the middle of the room. "I think we want this guy. Caught him lamping into Box Twenty-three at the post office. Yunno—the 'Professor,' who just raised his ante to fifteen thousand dollars in the letter we got to-day."

There was a pause. Every one took a wondering look at the shabby-genteel nondescript. The Professor looked back with a cocky air.

"Take it from me—this guy's put the jinx on Bill, and he's holding out on us for the fifteen thou'," said Trainer Bob. "That's my dope. Pass him the third degree, Kickhard, and find out."

It was the Professor himself who spoke first. His voice was liquid and soothing:

"I assure my muscular friend, here, that I never met a jinx, and I never had one about my person, so I am not guilty of 'putting the jinx on Bill.' Perhaps the gentleman is referring in his necessarily untutored way to a certain comparatively simple power of mental control that I possess, and which——"

"What's that about mental control?" Kickhard's voice had a ring of genuine interest in it.

The Professor favored him with a smile, passed as if between two gentlemen of equal mental attainments.

"I was saying that perhaps a solution of the embarrassing attitude I understand Mr. Blood has taken in reference to the pugilistic encounter that had been designed to take place on July Fourth—notice, gentlemen, that I say *had been*—might be traced to the effect of some simple mental control—some 'jinx,' if that is more comprehensible—that somebody has exerted over the mind of your pugilistic protégé."

"And who's that 'somebody'?" asked Kickhard quickly.

"Why, 'the little squirt,' as my friend here was pleased to use in his introductory; in other words, Box Twenty-three, the Professor, myself."

There was a murmur and shuffling of feet on the rag carpet. Bumpus put in a word:

"Say, get down to cases! Do you mean to stand there and tell us intelligent gents that you done something to Bill Blood's think tank, and we gotta

slip you fifteen thousand to take the hornswoggle away from Bill?"

"My terms, as stated in the last letter you received from me, are as you have correctly quoted." Unction dripped from the Professor's lips. "Putting it professionally: 'To removal of one hornswoggle, fifteen thousand dollars.'"

"Guess I'll have to call you, Professor," Kickhard then spoke up. "You're playing your cards mighty close to your vest, but how you goin' to prove all this bunk control business?"

"Without giving you a demonstration, which would cost you money," the Professor purred, "I might recall a certain painful scene to your minds. This morning, for instance, just when your Mr. Blood had come in from exercising, and when he was on the rubbing table, he said something like this:

"'I won't fight the Black Thunderbolt on the Fourth of July. I'm going to give up fighting. I think prize fighting is wicked and unmanly——'"

A chair crashed against the wall, and Trainer Bob had the Professor by the throat.

"How d'you know Bill said that, you little sneak! How d'you know, I say?"

The Professor coughed, then threw back his head defiantly.

"Because," he answered, "he couldn't help saying it. I told him to say it. And he'll stick to it, too, just as long as I want him to."

For a long minute there was silence in the room. Then Kickhard, the master mind, spoke:

"And so you've hypnotized our champion?"

"Yes, I think I have."

"And you won't take the spell off him unless we pay you fifteen thousand dollars?"

"That is putting it correctly."

"But suppose, Mr. Professor, we should decide to throw you in jail? You know, we are pretty hep with the district attorney here."

"Go right ahead, my friend, if you think that will improve the situation any. But you appreciate, of course, that my control over your Mr. Blood's mind will not be in the least affected by the fact that I am in jail. The fight will not come off unless I say so."

Another silence. Kickhard broke it.

"You know what you can do, Mr. Professor?" he asked, in chilly staccato.

"I know what I have done," the Professor answered jauntily.

"Well, you can beat it! Quick!"

The Professor moved toward the door. He stopped, as if arrested by an afterthought.

"Of course," he said, "if, on the way back to town, anything should happen to me—any little accident such as a hit over the head—your position would be more hopeless than if I were in jail, as you threatened." Kickhard shook his head wearily. "And, gentlemen, let me say, just in passing, as it were, that I will be at the post office at nine o'clock to-morrow morning."

Jay awoke next morning to wonder if its bitter nightmare of the night before was really true. The fever of doubt burned more fiercely, and there was a concerted pilgrimage to Mungo Springs. Closed shutters there, and a terrible air of desolation. Poundings on the front door brought no response; prowlings in the back yard discovered no reassurance.

The Professor ate a leisurely breakfast at the Bon Ton; then, on the dot of nine, he strolled over to the post office.

Trainer Bob stepped out of the door, grabbed him by the arm, and pushed him into an automobile at the curb. No word was spoken all the way to the Springs.

The two promoters and Manager Bumpus were in the inner room. When the Professor entered, he saw stacks of gold double eagles ranged on the edge of the table in front of Kickhard. The Professor smiled, and pulled a large canvas sack from one of his coat tails.

"Nix!" barked Kickhard. "You take the bee off Bill first, and then we pass the coin."

"Better put me in jail," said the Professor blandly. "I'd stand just as good a chance of getting the coin there as I

would here, if I did the trick without seeing the money in my sack first."

With an oath, Kickhard began to push the twenties across the table. Sheaves of bills were stacked up behind the gold ramparts. The Professor was an aggravating time counting and disposing of it all.

"And now, gentlemen," he said, when the last block of bills had rustled into the mouth of the sack, "let me be alone with Mr. Blood for just five minutes."

They took him, with the bulging sack still gripped in his hand, to a closed door, opened it suddenly, and pushed him in.

The Professor was absent less than five minutes. Then the door opened, and out came Bill Blood, stripped to trunks and fighting shoes, and with his dreaded left arm hung over the Professor's shoulder.

"Well, boys," said the undefeated champion, "guess it's 'bout time fer me to do a little work-out with the gloves. M' little friend here's going to see me spar."

With that, Bill Blood went out to the rosined stand under the cottonwood tree. While the delirious acclaim of the multitude rocked the cottage, the Professor slipped up to Kickhard.

"Just one other little piece of business between us, my friend," the Professor whispered. "I want to buy a fifty-dollar ringside seat for the fight."

Kickhard was a long time answering, and when he did it was with his fist directly under the Professor's nose.

"Why, you—— Looky here! I wouldn't have you in that arena on the Fourth of July if you paid me thirty thousand dollars for a postage stamp to sit on! Beat it!"

THE COST OF DESTRUCTION

WHEN the automobile habit first became fashionable, Elbert H. Gary, of the Steel Trust, went on a tour in New York State. Something happened to the machine, and it stopped dead in the middle of the road. A farmer was pressed into service, and given the job of "fixing" the engine. He said he was a good mechanic.

After an hour's hard work, he had the machine separated into all its component parts, and the road looked like a blacksmith shop struck by lightning. At the end of another hour, the farmer-mechanic announced that he was sorry, but he could not put the parts together. Gary and his companions decided to walk to the nearest village.

"Hold on!" protested the workman. "You owe me eight dollars."

"But you've ruined the machine," said Gary. "You can't charge for that."

"Well, I did the work of taking it to pieces, and I want the money," argued the farmer.

And he got it.

A WILEY WITTICISM

THE night that famous men debated, at the National Press Club, in Washington, on whether whiskers or baldness formed the greater handicap to great careers, the speeches were limited to ten minutes each, and Doctor Harvey W. Wiley, the pure-food expert, was timekeeper.

"Only one minute more!" he called out to Representative Nicholas Longworth, who was arguing that a bald head is a fine thing to carry through the world.

"Does that minute include these unsolicited interruptions?" asked Longworth.

"You bet it does," replied Wiley. "So far, the interruptions have been the best part of the speeches."

Rollo Rollins' Bargain

By Barton Wood Currie

What a shame to dress up a horse in blue blinders! A forgivable crime, however, since the blinders are "thrown in" with the bargain. Rollo gets the horse—and follows the most sensational display ever seen at a funeral

EVER since Rollo Rollins had been graduated from side buttons to one gallus, he had heard eloquent tales of the genius of Rosco Hawkins as a horse trainer. Nevertheless, when he set out one blossom-scented April morning to climb the long hill that led up to the Hawkins farm, he was brimful of confidence that he would not be hornswoggled. He had cut his wisdom teeth, by gum! and his eyeteeth, too, and he hadn't been visiting round at horse auctions for nothing.

The young man had departed from his home with brisk, determined stride; but as he struck up the lonely hill his step faltered, and now and then he stopped abruptly and addressed the silent trees by the roadside with shrill vehemence:

"Looker here, old man Hawkins, you needn't think I'm perishin' to buy that there colt. He's got a slick look about him, but I don't like his eye. As fer that set o' harness with the blue blinders, I wouldn't dress them onto a horse o' mine if it was a goat. I reckon to pay one hundred dollars flat fer that horse an' buggy; but, if that harness with the blue blinders has got to go along of it, you got to knock off ten dollars."

Occasionally Rollo would vary the address by inserting a peppery though not profane epithet; and so absorbed was he in his elocution that, when he finally found himself at the gate opening upon the barn-encircled yard, he was dumfounded to see the sorrel colt all girt and harnessed to the trim little buggy, and Rosco Hawkins standing off a few feet from the colt's head in an attitude of profound reverie.

The old man seemed utterly unconscious of Rollo's approach. Clad in a long linen duster and freshly greased boots, he stroked his stubbly gray beard with first one hand and then the other, moving his head slowly from side to side as his eye wandered over the glistening coat of the colt. Approval raised to the *n*th power of admiration glistened in the horse trader's puckered-up little eyes.

"Smartest colt I ever raised," he muttered, in tones audible to his visitor, but with eyes still averted and apparently unconscious of Rollo's presence.

"Got him all slicked up, eh?" burst out Rollo suddenly, squaring back his shoulders and eying the colt with exaggerated disfavor.

The horse trader wheeled around quickly, his every feature expanding with surprise.

"Howdy, Rollo?" he faltered, as if scarcely convinced of the actual presence of the young man. "Been over to your melon patch?" he added slowly, in the same dazed manner, his eyes still challenging the reality of his visitor.

"What'd I be doin' over to the melon patch this time o' year?" flung back Rollo, struggling to retain his conviction that he was being led into a trap. A suspicious trembling of the old man's eyelids caused him to flare up.

"Don't take on to me, Rosco Hawkins, that you don't know. I come up here consarnin' that colt. I reckon you seen me comin' up the hill an' went to work curryin' that colt an' slickin' him up."

Rosco Hawkins ignored this shaft of sarcasm, and began polishing one of the extraordinary pair of blue blinders which gave the shapely young animal such a grotesque appearance. But, before Rollo could open his lips again and pour forth the address that he had been practicing for weeks, the old man turned to him, and said sharply:

"See anythin' o' George Henry Smith this mornin'?"

Rollo choked out a negative, and again made a desperate effort to let go his address.

"Waal," snapped the horse trader, "if he don't come up here pretty spry, his option on Blitzen expirates."

"What's that?" gasped Rollo, growing suddenly pale.

"Jest what I said," responded the old man, with a click of the teeth. "I reckon you heard that George Henry Smith, o' Cedar Grove, bought an option on this here colt 'fore his legs was stiff. He's got up ter noon to-day ter buy this colt, harness, an' buggy for eighty dollars. Look down in the holler, an' see if that ain't his dust."

Rollo shaded his eyes with a shaking hand, gazed eagerly down into the Great Notch Valley, and then said faintly:

"There's dust down by the Pompton Turnpike, Mr. Hawkins."

"Calkerlate that's him," said the old man regretfully. "I wisht he'd break down or sunthin', fer it's like givin' away this colt an' buggy ter let it go fer eighty dollar."

"Looker here," cried Rollo Rollins excitedly. "I come up here to offer you one hundred dollars fer that rig if you'll rekermend the colt sound an' true. I got the cash right inter my hip pocket. There ain't no use you're waitin' fer that George Henry Smith. He never kept an app'intment in his life."

"Sorry, Rollo," said the horse trader ruefully, "but it's agin' the law to shy on one o' them options. You see, I give it to him in writin'."

"Mebbe he lost it," stammered Rollo. "He's the carelessest feller in this range o' hills."

"He pinned it into his hat," sighed the horse trader; "the same hat, Rollo, he's been wearin' goin' on seven year."

The young man again eagerly scanned the hollow. Suddenly his face lighted, and, whirling round on Rosco Hawkins, he exclaimed:

"That dust's gone, Mr. Hawkins. He's on'y got forty minutes to run on that option, an' there ain't a horse in Cedar Grove that can come up out o' that hollow in lessen an hour. I reckon you ain't takin' no more chances, nor I am, if you take this here money now."

Rollo Rollins extended a crumpled wad of bills in a fluttering hand.

"There's twenty *fives* in that bundle, Rosco Hawkins," he said hoarsely; "an' them bills represents a powerful lot o' eggs."

The horse trader cocked his left eye and squinted at the tempting sheaf of greenbacks. With maddening deliberation, he drawled:

"Rollo Rollins, if I'd let George Henry Smith take this colt, harness, an' buggy fer eighty dollar, it'd been like havin' it stole offen my farm; an', if I sell it to you fer one hundred dollar, it'll be pretty near like makin' you a present. I already told you I made a sportin' proposition with Smith at a time when that colt was sickly an' pinin'. If the colt had died, I'd been in ten dollar. But I nursed that colt out o' the grave. I reared him into a stepper, an' he's gettin' faster every day. Jest take notice o' how serene like an' gentle he stands in harness. That buggy new cost me sixty dollar; an' I paid thirty-five dollar cold cash fer that set o' harness, the blinders bein' made special fer that colt's mother. O' course, there's been some wear an' tear on that harness an' buggy; but to a practical man they're as good as new, an'——"

"Hol' on a minute," interposed Rollo, in a tremulous falsetto, "you don't need to go boostin' up that set o' harness with them blue blinders. You kin chuck them out o' the sale. I dun't want 'em. They're hidjus. I got new harness o' my own fer that colt."

The horse trader frowned and shook his head.

"If I let this here colt an' buggy go

fer that roll o' bills an' greenbacks you got wrapped in your fist," he said sharply, "you take him as he stands. I guarantee him as he stands an' as he drives in that set o' harness. Pass over them bills an' the sale's closed."

Rollo Rollins fairly jammed the money into the old man's hand. Then he laughed nervously, and said:

"If you wanter cheat yourself out o' that harness an' them fierce-lookin' blinders, Mr. Hawkins, all right. I'm goin' to sell it fer junk. 'Spect it oughter fetch a couple o' dollars."

The horse trader smiled pityingly, and began filling his pipe. As Rollo got into the buggy and took up the reins, the old man remarked in his easy, singsong drawl:

"O' course, I don't know nothin' about newfangled an' finicky styles o' harness, young feller, an' I dun't wanter. But jest you recall when you dresses up Blitzen in a new set o' straps that I sold him as he stands. Good luck, an' he don't need no whip."

Rosco Hawkins swung round on his heel and walked away.

When Rollo Rollins drove his new purchase down past the Great Notch post office and general store, he was sitting back in the buggy with an air of supercilious indifference, as if he were in the habit of buying a high-stepping, clean-limbed little carriage horse every day in the week. When he reached his home, he shouted to his wife to come out and see the colt.

Mrs. Rollins came out, and also Mrs. Rollins' mother, Mrs. Elvira Rue. But, before either of the two women deigned so much as a glance at the colt, they shrilled in the same breath:

"How much did he get out o' you, Rollo Rollins?"

"He—er—he wanted two hundred," faltered the young man, unnerved by the suddenness of the onslaught.

"Two hundred!" screamed Mrs. Rollins, while her mother seemed on the verge of a fit.

"I said he wanted two hundred," rejoined Rollo, warming up to the defensive. "I didn't say I give him two hundred, did I? I beat him down to one hundred, with the buggy an' harness throwed in."

"So he sold you that there harness, did he?" cried Mrs. Rollins, her voice vibrant with scorn. "I reckoned he would, Rollo Rollins, jest 'cause you been sayin' ever since you lost your senses over that colt that he couldn't trade that harness to you fer a gift. Mother an' me knowed all along he'd skin you out o' your eyeteeth. Didn't we, mother?"

"Nat'ral," snorted Mrs. Rue, with an eloquent curl of her lip that set her son-in-law on fire.

"He didn't charge me a dinged cent fer that harness," the young man hurled back at the accusing women. "He wanted to figger that harness in at forty dollars, an' soak me one hundred an' twenty-five fer the colt an' buggy. But I says, 'No, ol' man Hawkins, I warn't born yesterday. I won't give you a cent fer that harness,' I says, 'fer it ain't wuth its weight in cornstalks. You can't get a blamed cent more'n one hundred dollars out o' me fer that horse an' buggy,' I says, 'so you kin take off that harness, an' I'll go down an' fetch the new harness I bought partikerler. I wouldn't put them hidjus blue blinders on a jackass,' I says to him, which makes him so wild he most talked his teeth out.

" 'One hundred or nothin',' I kept recitin' at him, firm as rocks; an' pretty soon he weakens, an' says: 'Take the colt fer one hundred, Rollo Rollins, an' drive off these here premises 'fore I changes my mind.'

"I calkerlate, Mrs. Rollins an' Mrs. Rue, that I done a keen stroke o' business when I chucked him the money an' come down the hill with that colt's hind feet treadin' air.

"Look at him!" cried the young man, carried away by his own eloquence. "Ain't he the smartest little animal you ever seen? Drives smoother'n a clock, kin pass anythin' in the e-quine line in Great Notch like it had turned to stone—an' he don't need no whip. If you womenfolks don't believe it, jest git into that buggy an' drive him down to Gus Beebe's store."

Rollo Rollins paused for breath and faced his womenfolk defiantly. The tall, angular Mrs. Rue and the tall, angular Miss Rue-that-was did not reply. Both were stunned by the almost savage vehemence of the usually meek and lowly Rollo.

"Waal, air you goin' to take a drive?" he demanded, jumping down from the buggy and offering the reins to his wife.

"Do you wanter try th-th-th-ther colt, mother?" stammered Mrs. Rollins, subdued for the first time in her experience to a bewildering sense of awe for her husband. "He's a right trim an' smartish little horse," she added, as if to mollify the still angry-eyed Rollo.

"I hate to be seen ridin' behind them blue blinders," replied Mrs. Rue truculently; "but if it'll please you, Ella Louise, we might drive up to the store an' git that cake o' yeast we need."

During his new owner's outburst and the colloquy that ensued, the colt had stood patiently, not even moving his ears. He continued so until the women were seated and he had received the command to "gid-dap." Then he obeyed the reins perfectly, and broke into a swift, graceful trot.

When Mrs. Rollins and her mother returned from the store, they were met at the gate by the grinning Rollo.

"Now do you figger I was skinned erlive?" he gloated. "I been watchin' you from up in the elm, an' the way that colt moves is a picture."

"I got no fault to find," retorted Mrs. Rue, "except on them blinders. They make that colt look like a queer sort o' insect."

"That's all right," laughed the now appeased and happy Rollo. "I'll put the new harness on him to-morrer, an' drive you up to old Newt Notter's funeral. Ella Louise can't go on account o' the baby's whoopin' cough an' her new alpaca not bein' ready."

Having tenderly secured the colt in his stall, Rollo Rollins carried the old harness with the blue blinders up to Gus Beebe's store. He encountered George Henry Smith, of Cedar Grove, in the doorway. Smith greeted him heartily.

"Hello, there, Rollo. Hear you bought old Hawkins' sorrel colt?"

"Calkerlate I did, George Henry," chuckled Rollo, "seein' as you didn't show up to claim your option."

George Henry Smith looked blank.

"Didn't you have no option on that colt?" asked Rollo faintly. "That ol' robber tol' me——" Rollo's voice failed him.

A quick light sprang into George Henry Smith's eyes.

"I guess you mean the bet I made him when that colt was a week old, Rollo. Is that what he called it—an option?" Smith's rosy countenance broke into a dazzling smile, and his chuckles seemed to bubble up from his boots.

"W-w-w-w-what was that bet you made?" Rollo demanded fiercely.

"I b-b-b-b-bet 'im——" But George Henry Smith turned away, choking.

"You bet him what?" roared Rollo. "If that ol' serpent lied ter me, I'll——"

"You'll keep your mouth shut on it if you got any wisdom in you," advised Smith, suddenly regaining his composure.

"Murder ain't too good fer that ol' sidewinder!" ejaculated Rollo, in a final outburst.

"Did he sell you that ol' harness, too?" asked Smith.

"He didn't, neither," denied Rollo furiously. "He chucked it in with the colt an' buggy, an' I'm goin' to sell it fer junk."

"I'll give you two dollars fer it," offered Smith.

"What do you want it fer?" asked Rollo suspiciously.

"I got a crank on collectin' curious sets o' harness. You don't think I'd ever use them blinders on a horse I'd have ter ride behind, do you?"

"Make it three dollars, an' you kin have it," said Rollo sullenly.

The deal was closed without further parley, and George Henry Smith threw the harness upon his buckboard and drove away. As Rollo looked after him, he wondered what made the Cedar Grove egg broker wabble so unsteadily in his seat.

"I never could make out that George Henry Smith," he said to Gus Beebe, as he went slowly into the store. "He's a queer sort o' cuss, ain't he?"

"There's a lot of queer folks in these parts," replied the storekeeper. "But that ain't no sign to go by. There is some folks who are jest nat'ral darn fools, an' others that is foolish like a fox."

"Waal, I sold him that hidjus ol' harness with the blue blinders, anyhow," snorted Rollo. "I got a brand-new city harness in the barn. I'm goin' to put it on that colt to-morrer when I drive up to old Newt Notter's funeral."

Few of the Rollins' neighbors had seen the new harness. Therefore, after a family consultation the next morning, it was decided to take Blitzen out into the roadway and harness him with some ostentation. First Rollo led the carefully groomed colt out through the gate. Wally Riddle, the hired man, followed, pulling the buggy. Then the harness was brought out in sections.

Mrs. Rue, dressed becomingly in black for the funeral, came out and climbed in the buggy before the colt had been backed into the shafts. After she had seated herself, her daughter came out and discussed the new harness in tones that carried up and down the road. A swiftly augmenting throng of children and old men gathered to watch the solemn rites of harnessing the colt. All admired the shiny brass buckles and the oily sleekness of the leather. Favored ones were permitted to handle the bridle, collar, and martingale, which were seen to be of very superior workmanship "hand-sewed an' double-stitched."

As Rollo Rollins watched Wally Riddle put on the bridle, he was startled to see a tremor run through the colt and his ears go back and quiver.

"Easy on that there bridle, Wally," warned Rollo. "You ain't hitchin' up no ox team."

But Blitzen ceased trembling, and was soon girt and belted into the shafts, making a very handsome figure of a horse, as all who looked on proclaimed. When Wally Riddle had finally secured the bridle, he passed up the reins to his employer, who had mounted into the buggy beside his mother-in-law.

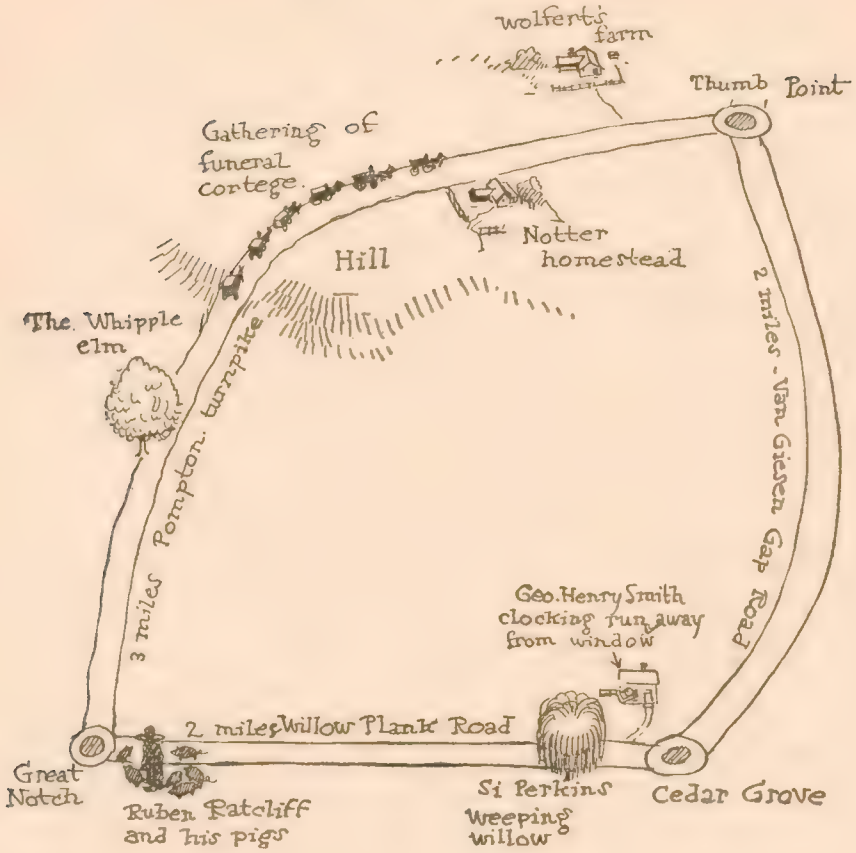
Rollo Rollins had no sooner grasped the reins than the colt was seized with another tremor, which attracted the attention of Mrs. Rue. While still trying to smile upon Adonirab Pfutter, who was leaning against the front wheel and complimenting her on her appearance, she nudged her daughter's husband.

"Give him a jerk o' the reins, Rollo. Them boys runnin' round in the road have fretted him."

Rollo obeyed with a light jerk. Light as it was, it had an astonishing effect upon the colt. As if a fire had suddenly kindled under him, Blitzen rose up on his hind legs and leaped forward. Adonirab Pfutter swears that the colt cleared forty feet in that leap, and Adonirab ought to know, as he accompanied the front wheel of the buggy, revolving like a strangely bearded pinwheel, for at least that distance.

Blitzen's second leap was even longer, according to Joel Robb, who was crossing the road on crutches one hundred feet from the Rollins' gate. Old Mr. Robb was compelled to drop his crutches and make astonishing progress on his hands and knees to get out of the way of the buggy.

Never in the history of Great Notch did an equipage start for a funeral in such a sensational manner. After the first few leaps, averred many witnesses, Blitzen's progress seemed supernatural. Nowhere within the environs of Great Notch, Thumb Point, and Cedar Grove could you find a person who would venture even a guess concerning the colt's average speed during the buggy's first circuit of the Great Notch, Thumb Point, and Cedar Grove Triangle. The entire circuit is seven miles—three miles on the Pompton Turnpike from Great Notch to Thumb Point, two miles on the Van Giesen Gap Road from Thumb Point to Cedar Grove, and two miles on the Willow Plank Road from Cedar Grove to Great Notch. The diagram shows the course, and also designates where the funeral of the venerable Newt Notter took place.



It would be well to consult the diagram from time to time in order to obtain a commensurate idea of that memorable ride. It was at the Whipple elm that Mrs. Rue lost her bonnet and wig. Young Oswald Whipple, who was sitting on the fence near the elm, said that he couldn't see the equipage coming for dust. As it passed, he could see dimly through the impalpable cloud. Mrs. Rue, he was quite sure, had both arms wound about her son-in-law's neck, and was discussing the colt in shrill, hysterical ejaculations. Rollo, very red in the face, was not replying to his mother-in-law.

Young Whipple suddenly fell from the fence rail where he was sitting. When he picked himself up, he saw Mrs. Rue's bonnet and wig swaying dismally from a bough of the elm. Quite a crowd gathered at that spot to view the bonnet and wig.

Approaching the Notter homestead, the progress of the colt and buggy was even more sensational than in its early stages, as a long line of carriages was toiling up the hill. The hill, dear reader, you will find designated in the diagram.

Near the foot of the hill, the buggy passed Mr. Edward Flecker's surrey, which contained Mr. and Mrs. Flecker, the Flecker twins, and old Mr. Flecker. The inside rear and front wheels were removed from the surrey; yet, aside from the fact that old Mr. Flecker complained that his new teeth had been ruined, none of the Fleckers was injured.

The damage was greater in the case of the Pebbles' carryall. John Pebbles insists that Blitzen galloped up over the back of the carryall, ran along the top, and leaped clear of the Pebbles team, the still-occupied buggy sailing slightly

through the air, with wheels spinning. Mr. Pebbles even goes so far as to assert that he heard Mrs. Rue speaking above his head, and that she mentioned quite harshly to Rollo Rollins the loss of her bonnet and wig. Mr. Pebbles' assertion was not generally accepted as a conservative relation of fact. That his carryall was wrecked and that seven members of his own and his wife's family were stunned and bruised was established beyond peradventure of doubt. The sum of their hurts, as afterward totaled by the Pebbleses, should have proved fatal to as many mastodons.

Blitzen flashed by divers other carriages in the funeral cortège on his way up the hill, severing on an average of one wheel from each carriage. Undertaker Dredger, who was standing at the heads of his team, related that the colt shied at the hearse, sweeping clear of its wheels and running over old Napoleon Notter, a brother of the deceased. Nap Notter lost only his new wooden leg and a G. A. R. button that was crushed in the lapel of his coat.

It is not known whether Rollo Rollins guided Blitzen around the Thumb Point turn, or whether the colt turned of his own accord. For many days after, Rollo was hopelessly taciturn on the subject. Witnesses who were run over at the turn say that neither the wheels of the buggy nor the heels of the colt touched the ground as the rig flew round into Van Giesen Gap Road in a blur of dust and domestic fowl.

Testimony available would seem to prove that the run from Thumb Point to Cedar Grove did not occupy quite four minutes. George Henry Smith tried to get the time with his stop-watch while taking observations from his parlor window with his spyglass. He failed, he declared, because his watch was not fast enough.

It was at the Si Perkins weeping willow, just beyond the crossing of the Van Giesen Gap Road, that Mrs. Rue abandoned her son-in-law; retaining, though, his collar and necktie. A coil of willow withes snapped about her, and lifted her bodily from the seat. George Henry Smith assisted her down from the branches and loaned her his grandmother's wig.

Left to his own devices, Rollo Rollins braced himself in the buggy, and yelled: "Whoa!" to the colt in a voice that stopped at least a dozen nags rods in advance of him, but made not the slightest impression on Blitzen. As the speeding colt dashed onward to Great Notch, Reuben Ratcliff and his herd of swine got in the way. Reuben sent in a bill afterward for nine hogs, which Rollo refused to pay unless furnished with itemized specifications and the accruing pork from the alleged slaughter.

Passing his own home, Rollo had a clear road. He was hailed from trees and porch roofs by many of his friends and relatives, but did not seem to hear. Mrs. Rollins called out to him, and demanded to know what he had done with her mother. Before she could repeat her query, Rollo was a mile beyond.

As Blitzen tore up the hill on his second approach to the Notter homestead, he did not encounter any of the funeral cortège save broken wheels. In front of Wolfert's farm, a curious flock of geese ran out to investigate what was coming; but no other biped ventured into the road during Rollo's second loop of the Great Notch, Thumb Point, and Cedar Grove Triangle. The geese, which had become involved in the buggy wheels, shed their feathers profusely for several miles, giving the runaway somewhat the aspect of a locomotive snowplow in action.

On the third circuit, Rollo caught sight of Rosco Hawkins standing on the porch of Gus Beebe's store, and shook his fist at him. Before Rollo could utter any remark to emphasize the gesture, however, Blitzen sprinted again, and the village of Great Notch receded as if hitched to a shooting star.

It was on the fourth round that the shafts suddenly parted from the buggy and Rollo Rollins was left behind. This occurred on the Willow Plank Road, only half a mile from Gus Beebe's store. Rollo was not quite himself as he was assisted to his home. Doc Thorne administered sedatives, and informed Mrs. Rue that it would be idle for her to

attempt to talk to her son-in-law about the colt until the following morning. She had a good deal on her mind, and talked at length in her sleep; but, before she was up next morning, George Henry Smith, of Cedar Grove, called to see Rollo. To avoid interruption, Rollo led Smith back of the barn.

"I found the colt up on Signac Hill after sundown," began Smith, without prelude. "He was pretty well tuckered out, and had got rid of his harness. I've got him in my barn. Do you——"

"I ain't got any ready money left," interposed Rollo Rollins huskily; "but I'll give you five dozen eggs and a yearling calf if you'll take that colt off my hands. I don't care what you do to him."

Smith wrinkled his eyes and deliberated. Finally, as if in an outburst of sympathy for the haggard Rollo, he said:

"I'll take the critter offen your hands, Rollo."

Rollo grasped Smith's hand and shook it several times, while his eyes overflowed with gratitude.

Later in the morning, George Henry Smith called on Rosco Hawkins. The two men regarded each other in silence several minutes. Finally Smith said:

"Rosco Hawkins, I ain't never asked you to pay that bet you made me that that colt was born springhalt, and would never be a runner. Now, we'll call that bet off, and I'll throw a yearling calf and five dozen eggs in besides if you'll tell me what them blue blinders has to do with the way that colt drives."

"They ain't got nothin' ter do with it," responded Hawkins. "Ain't you noticed nothin' about that bridle you bought offen Rollo 'ceptin' them blinders?"

"There's a rubber bit," ventured Smith.

"That's it," said the horse trader. "That colt was born with bad teeth, and I took him down to Doc Shaw, the Newark vet. Doc Shaw sees that both his upper an' his lower teeth is bad, an' fills 'em with some stuff he calls 'malgum. He says to me after he done the job an' got his money:

"'Hawkins,' he says, 'you gotter use a rubber bit on that colt, for he's full o' 'lectricity. The minute you put a steel bit in between them 'malgum fillin's, that colt'll shoot sparks. He'll pick up all the 'lectricity out o' the ground into his system,' says Doc Shaw, 'an' a live trolley wire'll be a piece o' frozen rope 'longside o' him.' That's the answer as to that colt, George Henry Smith, an' you kin send up that yearlin' calf an' them eggs to-morrer."

"But what did you put them hidjus blue blinders onto that bridle fer?" asked George Henry Smith.

The old man regarded his questioner with a look of infinite pity, which slowly changed to anger.

"Blinders is blinders, ain't they?" he snapped.

"Y-y-y-yes," assented Smith faintly.

"Waal, I reckon there's ernuff said;" and the horse trader turned on his heel and walked away.

TAFT AND TAFFY

FOR a good many years President Taft's weight has stayed close to the three-hundred-pound mark, sometimes a little less, sometimes a trifle more.

On one occasion, when he was governor of the Philippines, an old friend stopped off from a trip around the world, and, according to the custom of old friends, proceeded to hand out a bunch of "taffy" to the big man.

"Well, Bill," he said finally, "I wouldn't worry about the heat out here. People tell me it's taking the flesh off you in great style."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Taft, greatly pleased. "Of course it's a lie—but tell it to me again."

Telepathy

A STORY OF THE SHERIFF OF BADGER

By George Pattullo

Author of "A Club Flush," "A Cow-puncher Widow," Etc.

THERE lived in Badger, some years ago, an individual by the name of Pat Killough. I suspect he was of Irish strain. Nobody in the community was especially predisposed toward Mr. Killough except a few hangers-on at the Fashion, and a lady known as Picnic Kate; but her opinion cannot be accepted unreservedly, because persons who have no nice friends are not entitled to consideration by you and me. In respect to appearance, this Killough was a counterpart of the sheriff of Badger. They were the same height; they had the same indolent droop of the shoulders, and the similarity in facial make-up was marked; yet a certain line from the edge of Pat's nostrils to the corners of his mouth, and a different glint to the eyes, betrayed the spurious nature of the resemblance. Killough even had little tricks of manner that reminded one of Johnson, and at times he manifested the large generosity which had kept the sheriff poor all his life. In fact, the two were so alike that they hated each other cordially.

"Every time I see him on the street, he gives me a start," Hetty Ferrier exclaimed.

"So he does me," the sheriff said, grinning. "But he always starts me for my gun."

"Lafe."

"What is it?"

"Lafe, I'm sort of afraid."

The sheriff was amazed and doubtful. "That's the first time I ever done saw you scared, then. No, I don't believe it—no, ma'am."

"But I am!"

"Man alive, what of?"

"Well, ever since Killough came back I've had a sort of feeling—— Oh, I can't explain what I mean——"

"You're sick," the sheriff said, with some anxiety. "You sure are. I swan I never saw you like this before, Hetty. You——" He glanced at her quickly, and his face cleared. "I see now. Sure."

"Huh, that's not it! I haven't had time to think of that"—they were to be married in a fortnight—"but some way or other Pat Killough has me scared."

"Has he ever said a word to you?" Johnson inquired, in an all-too-quiet tone.

"No-o-o. Scared for you, I mean. No, no—he never says anything. Just looks, with a sort of laugh in his eyes, no matter how sober his face is."

This was easy of comprehension to the sheriff, and he nodded. It was one of the methods by which the gun fighter annoyed him, too. Ever since a jury of nesters had acquitted Killough of stealing horses from the big cattle company, he had been flaunting his immunity in the face of his enemy. The town was free to him now, so long as he behaved himself, and never a day passed that he did not put himself in the sheriff's way, greeting him with sly heartiness. It made Lafe boil with rage, but one can't shoot a man merely because he is pleasant.

They walked along toward the widow's house, where Hetty was staying until her marriage. After that she would

Other stories of the sheriff of Badger appeared in the following issue of POPULAR: First August, August Month-end, September Month-end. Back numbers can be obtained through any news dealer.

move to Johnson's place, beyond the Willows.

"Why don't you throw it all up?" she asked abruptly.

"You mean my job? Resign—quit being sheriff?"

"Yes, I do. You're bound to get killed some day. And, for Heaven's sake, what is there in it? If things go right—well, that's what they're supposed to do, anyhow; but if things go wrong, you get blamed." Hetty spoke sharply. She looked around at the ugly, huddled nakedness of Badger, and there was loathing in her eyes.

"The place ain't fit for a human to live in," she added.

"You won't have to stay here long," the sheriff reminded her.

"But anything's apt to happen before that."

He sauntered soberly beside her, his gaze on the ground. At last he said:

"You'd have me quit? You'd have me back down, when they—all these here people—done put me in just because they thought I was the best man to clean up this bunch? I don't believe it for a minute, Hetty—that ain't like you."

"Gunmen ain't the only toughs in this town," she declared darkly.

"I don't take you, ma'am. Oh, you mean—them?" He pointed to the outskirts of Badger, to the red-tinned roof of Dutch Annie's abode.

"Yes, I do," said Hetty, flushing.

Nothing more was said until they arrived at the widow's gate. Then, as he bade her good night, Lafe remarked, in a casual voice, as though the step were trivial: "I'll do that, too. There'll be an awful howl around town, but I'll do it."

He had gone a hundred yards, when she called him back:

"Oh, Lafe!"

'What is it?" he asked, returning.

"That poor creature—Sarah—you remember Jackson?"

"I thought we'd agreed not to say anything about that feller?" he interrupted.

"Yes, Lafe, but—well, I might have been—— You'll look after her, won't you, Lafe?"

"Sure. They'll all be all right. Don't you worry. Good night."

He was very serious as he took his way homeward. What he planned to do amounted to a moral revolution in Badger, and there would assuredly be an outcry and a tremendous to-do. True, the town had been purged before. Once, in the hottest of hot weather, driven to frenzy by Brother Ducey's exhortations—he was a genius in choosing the purgatorial months for his vivid pictures of a living hell, was the brother—a crowd of citizens had rushed from the building, and, surging across the sand flats to the establishment of Dutch Annie's predecessor, had ousted the merry sisters in the dark of the night, and had then fired the house. But, as is usual in such cases, reaction from their zeal was swift and far-reaching. Dutch Annie came and flourished; and when the citizens of Badger elected Johnson sheriff, no mention of this cancer in the body social was made in the program of reform.

"It ain't decent. Hetty's got the rights of this, I reckon," Lafe assured himself, after long deliberation.

He had given scant thought to certain aspects of their border life. Where much that would be viewed with horror by decent members of an older civilization is tolerated as an established factor in communal life by law-abiding people, a man is apt to become complaisant of laxity. Many evils existing in Badger had never struck the sheriff as such, simply because they had always been; but he was learning. Little glimpses of Hetty's viewpoint, revealed in their talks every day, shook his own code of conduct to its spine, and filled him with a species of awe.

"Let 'em roar," he concluded. "It'll be a mighty fine wedding present for her."

The sheriff was an execrable politician, or he would have proceeded differently. Had he possessed the sagacity of a ward leader, how he would have corralled the reform vote by going at his task with beating of drums and a

fanfare of announcements! Lafe took quite a different method. He paid a call, in a spirit approaching friendliness, and, after some vehement protests and weepy pleadings, he departed, with a promise extracted. Dutch Annie was as good as her word. Next day a little company of pilgrims boarded the stage, bound for the railway. They looked sadly worn and tough in the glare of sunlight, in spite of extravagant efforts with the rouge pot and the powder rag; but they put a brave face on the situation, and exchanged badinage with the few choice spirits gathered to witness the departure.

"Well, so long, Lafe," said Dutch Annie, who was a just woman, according to her lights. "It was right mean, but I reckon you had to do it. And you've acted the gen'l'man, which is more'n I can say for a lot of loafers in this here town."

Jeff cracked his long whip, the mules lurched against their collars, and the stage rattled away. That was the last that Badger ever saw of her.

So quietly had the feat been accomplished that the town really did not awake to the fact until they had gone. Then criticism broke out.

"I suppose you'd call it the right thing, looked at in a lahge way, Lafe," the landlord of the Cowboys' Rest ventured, in mild protest. "It's more religious, in course. But you'd ought to have thunk of some of the boys. We ain't got so many amusements here."

Others assumed a more violent tone, but these excoriations were delivered where the sheriff did not hear them. They held that he had exceeded his duties and powers; his job was to do what was bidden in the by-laws to preserve order, not to regulate the private affairs of everybody in the town. Man alive, first thing one knew, Johnson would be breaking up card play, and it wouldn't be safe for a man to shake dice with a barkeep for the drinks. Jake Taylor, who had once been a miner, and who had now joined the leisure classes, talked freely of referendums and the recall, Jake being addicted to newspaper reading.

The sheriff was fully aware of what was being said; yet it gave him a new sense of power to feel, back of his act, the support of the better element. They arrayed themselves with him unostentatiously, for fear of ruptures that might work havoc to business. Nevertheless, he knew their support could be counted on. Indeed, Turner and other substantial men of the place hastened to assure the sheriff that he had done a brave thing. Not a word of it did he breathe to Hetty, but when he called for her the following night, she was waiting for him at the gate. When Johnson saw her smile of understanding and confidence, he had no regrets, whatever might befall.

"Pat Killough's done left town," he told her; "he hit across the border."

"Yes, I know; but all the same——"

"Don't! Let's be cheerful," the sheriff begged, and laughed. "It's only ten days now, hon."

"Well," said Hetty, with a sigh of content, clinging to his arm, "there's one comfort. If anything ever did happen to you, I'd know it, if you were in Jericho."

"How?" he asked, much diverted.

"Why, you booby, I could feel it!"

It wanted but three days to their wedding. Lafe tried to persuade himself that he was perfectly cool, but every time the imminence of the approaching ceremony recurred to him he would break out into a cold perspiration. Suppose he should lose the ring! Hetty perceived his condition, and it afforded her much satisfaction. As for herself, she was collected and of unruffled poise.

As Lafe was coming from dinner at the Fashion Annex, a Mexican handed him a letter. It was undated and without beginning:

Pat's sore. Look out for him. ANNIE.

The sheriff had received so many warnings in his time that he had grown callous, and seldom attached any significance to them; but he knew that Dutch Annie was not given to foolish alarm. So he tore her note into minute particles, and saw to the oiling of his

six-shooter. That was the only preparation Johnson ever made for trouble.

As I have mentioned elsewhere, the sheriff lived in a two-room frame shack somewhat removed from its neighbors. It was a full mile from the widow's house, where Hetty lodged. His housekeeping had a fine touch of simplicity. If all things were favorable, and he had nothing else to do, Lafe would make the bed once a week. To do him justice, he had been known to sweep the place, also. That was not a particularly arduous task, inasmuch as the furniture consisted of the bed aforesaid, one chair, one table with three legs, which stood propped against the wall, and a packing case for a washstand.

About seven o'clock that evening, he led a spare horse to the widow's house, and took Hetty for a ride. They talked of the future—soberly, almost as a staid married couple. She never indulged in coquetry, and their courtship had not been of the kind to make jealousy expedient or a desirable weapon for her use. After she had dismounted at the gate:

"I wish you weren't going. I'm sort of nervous to-night."

The sheriff smiled down at her. "I reckon you'd best get a glass case to keep me in, hon."

"I know it's silly—but you'll be awful careful, won't you, Lafe?"

"Sure," he said. "There ain't a native in ten counties that likes getting hurt less'n I do."

He put the horses up, and repaired to the Fashion, for it was in his mind to ascertain the latest reports of Killough's whereabouts. It was not to be supposed that a man of the rustler's temper would take the expulsion of Picnic Kate from Badger in a spirit of decorous humility. The proprietor had it on excellent authority that Pat was far down on the Baccanochi Range, endeavoring to cheat the natives out of a herd of stock cattle. The sheriff stood at the bar and conversed for a space.

"You got a new gun, Lafe?" the Fashion man inquired, pointing to his belt.

"No-o-o. Just been cleaning this up some."

The other held out a languid hand, and Johnson passed him the gun. It was a workmanlike .45, single action, and the hammer rested on an empty chamber for safety. The Fashion proprietor turned it over with the ease and appreciation of an expert. He pulled back the hammer and twirled the chambers.

"She's a beaut," he observed.

"Yes, that's a right good gun," Lafe agreed. He received it back carelessly, and slipped it into the holster. They chatted indifferently for a moment, and Life drank a nightcap, and started home.

The night was dark and sticky. Back of the mountains, brooding somberly above the valley, thunder was muttering. The air clung about him like a soft blanket. Some bull bats wheeled in soundless flight about his head. Lafe glanced at the dirty sky, and wondered whether those hurrying wracks of clouds would shed rain. They had a pitiless habit of holding out hope, only to blow over, leaving the country gasping.

His door was shut. It struck him as odd, because he never locked his house, having nothing of value to safeguard. Inside, it was so black that the darkness seemed to buffet him in the face. He crossed the empty outer room, and felt his way to the table against the far wall. On it stood always an empty bottle, a candle jammed into the neck. This was the sheriff's light system. His hands groped over the rough surface, but he could not find it, nor the matches usually piled close beside. He fumbled in his pocket—nothing there but some keys and loose silver.

"Pshaw!" he muttered. "Well, it doesn't matter. I can undress in the dark."

He moved toward the bed. Then his stomach muscles tightened, and he halted, rigid. Slowly his head turned to see what was behind. There was somebody in the room. He stared until his eyes smarted, but could see nothing. He listened, but could catch no

sound. Yet, somewhere close to him, a living thing moved; he was positive of that. Nobody had ever questioned Johnson's courage, but now he experienced a peculiar gripping of the throat, and the roots of his hair at the nape of his neck tingled.

"Who's there?" he demanded.

Surely there was a faint stirring in the corner, the merest pin point of a sound. The sheriff whipped out his gun. He could descry nothing; but, pointing with his forefinger along the barrel to where he thought an object crouched, he thumbed the hammer. It fell with a click on an empty chamber. Right on the snap of the trigger, a body hurled itself through the dark on Johnson.

Instantly he grappled it. A knife thrust was the danger now, and he locked his arms about his assailant, and heaved sideways, driving his hip against the opposing hip to give momentum to the throw. The other lost his feet, and Lafe swung with all his weight, but they crashed against the wall, which brought them up standing. So they stood, breast to breast, panting. The sheriff suddenly brought his right knee upward with force, desirous of driving it into his opponent's stomach; but the blow was caught on the thigh, and again they went lurching about the room, gasping for breath, but voiceless. Even as he strove to pinion the jerking arms, Johnson's mind ran on the empty chamber. How had that happened? Sure—the Fashion man had done it.

In swift rage, he tried for a lower hold, feeling his enemy weaken. The momentary release of his grip was enough. The other wrenched one arm free, and swung it. Lafe was dimly conscious of a blow on the head, and there was a crash and tinkle of broken glass. He felt no pain. It seemed to him that trains were rushing by at high speed, and he was beset with the idea that he had something to do that he was powerless to perform. His fingers twitched and scratched at the floor for the handle of his six-shooter, but all the strength seemed gone from them. And now, mingling with the roar of the train and the harsh screaming of brakes, was the rattle of a horse's hoofs. The sheriff stretched out on his back, and sighed; his limbs relaxed.

The smart patter of rain on the roof was the first sound that roused Johnson. Assuredly the house leaked, for there were warm drops falling on his face, too. Next, he heard somebody strike a match, and he began to speculate, with a sort of lazy wonder, as to what a woman was doing there, and what she was crying about. Then a shooting pain above the right ear wrung an exclamation from him, and he tried to sit up.

"Don't, don't! You must lie still."

"Hetty!" he said.

She knelt beside him, and held a wet handkerchief to the wound.

"You're hurt bad, Lafe. Don't talk," she whispered.

"Pat Killough——"

"Yes, I know, dear; lie still."

Splinters of a bottle strewed the floor around him. So Killough had got away. The sheriff looked weakly at Hetty.

"How did you get here?" he asked.

"Hush! You mustn't talk. Keep still, and I'll go for the doctor."

"How——"

"I heard you calling me," she said.

"Calling you?" the sheriff repeated. "Why, hon, I never said a word!"

OLD WINE IN A NEW BOTTLE

"What is this 'dollar diplomacy' they're talking about?" asked the good-natured man.

"Same old kind we've always had," explained the thin man. "It means that only millionaires can afford to be ambassadors."

Changing the Luck

By Frank Condon

Mr. Condon has written a number of naive stories of everyday life which have the same human quality that made the O. Henry tales so popular. In fact we don't know any living writer who has a better right to be classed with O. Henry. We think we ought to have some of these stories in the POPULAR and we have asked Mr. Condon to do a series for us. This is the first.

WE'VE all seen it. It would be difficult to find a regular New York person who has not seen it, if we leave out old ladies, young girls in boarding schools, elderly gentlemen who have never ridden on railway trains and who are otherwise peculiar, and young men who have never smoked cigarettes, imbibed bock beer, played slot machines, said damn, or ordered a Welsh rabbit at midnight.

It usually hangs over the cash register against the polished mirror—mirrors are inevitably polished, the same as French counts and Harvard poets—in a streaky wooden frame, and there is usually sentiment attached to it, in addition to the fly specks, the sentiment existing in the fact that it is the first dollar received across the counter on the opening day and soon after the doors are thrown open for business.

Sometimes it is a five-dollar bill, and then sentiment degenerates into vulgar ostentation. Many a man has stood sadly before the long counter, fingering his final nickel and gazing with covetous thoughts upon the framed and useless bill above the glistening glasses.

In Scanlon's Café, the bill in the wooden frame was a one-dollar bill, and the only attention it ever received was an occasional wiping off of its glass face by Joey Brown, the skilled and long-suffering genie of the bar. He regarded it ordinarily without sentiment, superstition, interest, or malice. If he had been at his usual post behind the polished mahogany on a certain day, a wet cloth in his clammy fist and distrust in his blue eye, all might have been different; results might not have been what they were; this virtuous, accurate, and historical chronicle would have been lost.

He was not there. Jerry Scanlon, himself, twisted the shining taps on that eventful morning when a red head appeared in the doorway. The red head was permanently attached to an individual named Brick, the pertinence of the cognomen being instantly apparent. More about him than his name, Jerry discovered later.

"How are you?" said Brick, advancing cheerfully and confidently into the sunny room.

"I'm all right," Jerry replied, without a trace of enthusiasm. "Are you looking for something?"

"No," said Brick, without any diminution of cheerfulness, "but I'm looking *at* something."

His face beamed. His lips parted in a boyish and confidential smile, and his eyes rested upon the one-dollar bill in the frame over Scanlon's cash register—rested longingly, companionably, and joyously, as one regards the sudden appearance of a dear old pal.

"You haven't any money, have you?"

Jerry remarked, not in question form, but as a confident statement.

"Not a sou markee."

"And you want to mace me for a drink."

"I do not."

"What do you want?"

"I want that one-dollar bill hanging up there in the frame," said the coinless customer, without batting an eye.

"Couldn't I give you the safe or the register or one of my children?" Jerry asked pleasantly. "Who are you?"

"Wait a minute and I'll tell you a story," Brick returned. "It isn't long. That dollar bill is the first bill taken across your bar. It belonged to me. I was the first customer to spend a bill. There is no doubt about the facts, so far. If you will look at it, you will notice that the bill was accidentally torn in half. I tore it myself and pasted it together again with the thin strip of yellow paper. You can see the yellow paper, can't you?"

"Perfectly," Jerry replied.

"To you," Brick continued, "I appear to be a somewhat seedy individual, on the verge of asking you for liquid refreshment. Such is not the case. I want no drink. I am through with drink. That dollar in the wooden frame was the last vestige of my respectability. When that dollar passed from me into your possession, I began to lose everything that a decent, self-respecting man ought to retain. I will admit that I slid and slid until I approached the edge of complete bumdom. I drank too much. I lost my cheerfulness and my former good looks. I lost my home and became a wanderer upon the face of a heartless and indifferent world. Every one turned against me. Prosperous men and women looked upon me with open scorn."

"What's your name?" Jerry asked, unmoved.

"In the depths of my present degradation, my name is Brick. I hope to rise again. I am not a sodden derelict. I am a romantic and a sentimental man, and I come to you to-day and ask you to give me back the dollar that started me on the downward course. I ask this favor, wholly on the strength of my superstition, knowing perfectly well that I can retrace my steps to the point where I parted with the bill."

"What'll you do if I give you the bill?" Jerry asked.

"It is as though I had traveled a long, strange road," Brick continued, gazing moodily at the frame. "After many weary miles, I came to a place where the road branched. Two forks led away, one to the right and one to the left, and the dollar bill was at the parting of the forks. I took the road to the left and found desolation, ruin, poverty, humiliation, contempt of my fellow beings, and utter failure. I now desire to go back over that ill-fated pathway and again take up my course. I want to wipe out the months of my life that followed the spending of that bill over your bar and start afresh. You are a human being, in spite of your calling, and you can understand, perhaps, the pathetic struggle of a less fortunate one—the desperate, heartbreaking endeavor to get back to decency."

Jerry looked out of the plate-glass window, and an unmanly tear bedimmed his eye. After a pause, he said:

"Brick, I'll go you."

A moment later, he reached up, removed the dollar bill from its wooden shelter, and passed it across the bar.

"Words are useless," said Brick, taking the bill and tenderly folding it. "My heart alone speaks; my lips are silent. You will never forget this act of yours—you will never, never, never forget the day you gave Brick the dollar bill."

The door opened. Joey Brown appeared. He bustled behind the counter and donned his spotless suit of white. Jerry stared after the retreating red head, and his face was very thoughtful.

"Well, why don't you go home?" Joey inquired, after a suitable lapse. Then he started to clink open the cash register. He stopped, with his thumb upon the key. His astounded eyes fell upon the ravished wooden frame.

"Where's—where is it?" he asked explosively. "Where's the dollar?"

Jerry said:

"I just gave it to that red-headed man who went out as you came in."

Joey Brown sat down upon the lower shelf and stared at his employer in speechless amazement. He drew in his breath and held it for forty seconds before speaking.

"Have you gone crazy?" he inquired. "What did you do that for?"

"He came in and told me all about the bill. He spent it here. Since he spent it, he's had nothing but hard luck. He wants to start over again, so I gave it back to him."

"Heavenly flying buttonholes!" exclaimed Joey, wiping the mist away from his eyes. "I can see the headlines in the newspapers already: 'Jerry Scanlon goes nutty; West Side citizen has barnacles on his roof beams.' You didn't give him any of the furniture, did you?"

"I tell you he's had hard luck," Jerry said mildly.

"You're out of your mind, that's what you are," Joey said warmly and without regard for the conversational convention that should endure between boss and bossed. "You're plumb loony. You've been standing behind this bar for years, looking into the face of graft and panhandling, listening to touch stuff by the bale, sneering at pikers who've tried to bounce you for free drinks, and yet you fall for this children's nursery yarn about the bill—yes, about *the bill*. I'm not superstitious, but you are. I don't see how you could trifle with your luck. I don't understand it at all."

"You don't have to," Jerry retorted sourly. "This is my place of business and I can give it away to anybody I like. Now, let up on the bill incident."

"I bet you'll have bad luck," Joey said. "I bet something happens to you. This is the first time in the history of New York that a man gave away his framed bill."

Something happened.

The sun shone in brightly through the stained-glass windows. The tiled floor clattered with the shuffling of many feet. Business became brisk. Joey sped back and forth. Jerry started down cellar to see why pipe number one was not flowing. Something happened to his foot as it touched the top step, and immediately thereafter he tumbled. At the bottom, he sat up, grasping his leg between both hands—a very thoroughly broken leg. Joey and two startled customers carried him tenderly upstairs, and sent for a physician, and a half hour later Jerry Scanlon reposed in his own bed.

"You've got a compound fracture," said the doctor. "It's bad."

"How long will I be here?" Jerry groaned.

"Two weeks at least; maybe three."

Then the doctor departed, and Mrs. Scanlon came and stood beside the bed and laid her cool hand upon Jerry's forehead. Once Jerry raised himself upon his elbow.

"Mary," he said. "Do you know what I did this morning? I gave away the dollar bill in the frame—the first bill that ever came across the bar. I overcame my superstition. This is what I get for it."

"Never mind, Jerry," his wife answered. "There's a lot of luck left."

In Scanlon's Café, Joey concluded the story of the morning's incidents for the twentieth time.

"And I says to him, says I, "it's bad luck, and something'll happen to you, and I hope to croak right here this minute if he didn't walk over to the stairs and break his leg five seconds after I spoke."

There are sixteen thousand saloons in Greater New York—or sixteen hundred thousand—it is very difficult to remember the precise number. Each saloon has a proprietor and each proprietor has a wife, and about one wife in every wife and a half is intensely wrapped up in the single problem of getting her husband out of the liquor business and into something respectable. This is purely a wifely attitude. The liquor business may rise to heights of utter respectability—but not in the opinion of saloon men's wives.

Mary Scanlon had been working on the appeal for a number of years.

Jerry's two daughters, Helen and Louise, had rendered able assistance, and Jerry had promised that at some vague and distant time he would quit. In the meantime, he was diligently making money—plenty of it. In the long, mysterious room above his spotless café were green-topped tables. The roulette wheels whirred merrily the livelong day and most of the livelong night. The card game ambled on apace, with a five-per-cent kitty for the house. Faro and trente et quarante occupied the attention of numerous money-loving souls, and the district leader smiled and chummed with Jerry Scanlon. When district leaders are affable, the police walk with shielded eyes and muffled ears.

Mary Scanlon had often said:

"You know perfectly well, Jerry Scanlon, that you don't have to run a saloon. You've got plenty of money as it is, and the very minute you get out of the business, you can go into politics and make twice as much as you are making."

"I am in politics," Jerry answered mildly. "If I wasn't, I'd have to close up shop."

"I mean you can go to Congress from the district. You can be somebody. Your wife and daughters can walk on the avenue without being pointed out as the family of a liquor seller. You can be a big man instead of a little rum seller. Big Mike McCarthy has often promised me he'd give you any political position you wanted. But, no; you go on disgracing your daughters and your wife. You can't respect me or your children, and you know it."

At this point, it was Mrs. Scanlon's invariable custom to shed a few silent tears; whereupon it was also Jerry's unchangeable custom to walk out the front door with the expression of a man whose dignity has been deeply wounded.

Therefore, while Mary Scanlon was properly grieved—while her sympathy and kindly care of the patient were all that any one could expect from the most loving wife—she was secretly gratified at having her husband at home and away from the café. That prosperous institution would suffer nothing in Jerry's absence. Joey Brown managed the refreshment department with the skill of a trusted veteran; and Mike Hogan was the ruler, with unlimited powers, in the gambling emporium upstairs, assisted and ably seconded in all things by Bat Moran.

Whether the Scanlon luck had changed totally with the disappearance of the dollar bill, or whether it would have changed anyhow, is for scientists to discuss. It is a matter of stern record that, on the day following Jerry's unfortunate wreckage of the left propeller, a large and earnest Teuton, carrying a keg of beer, slipped on a banana peel in front of Jerry's store, and immediately thereafter, the unfeeling cask hurtled through four hundred dollars' worth of plate glass. The German was not to blame, and neither was the cask. The only thing that felt the effects was Jerry's check book.

The peace of the establishment was seriously interfered with during the same evening through the feverish activities of a young man from the Bronx. He was carrying a heavy cargo of undry goods, and at times listed seriously to starboard in the trough of the weltering sea; but at no moment did he neglect to inform the languid gatherers in Scanlon's that he was a lone wolf from the Poison Valley, and it was his night to howl.

Tiring of the reiterated statement, a street-car conductor spoke rudely to the Bronx young man; and, before Joey could get around to the scene of carnage, one of the Scanlon chandeliers had gone by the board with a sharp popping of electric globes.

Then Bat Moran's youngest son became temporarily attached to the scarlet fever, and Bat was quarantined at home. Joey Brown fell ill with a violent attack of dyspepsia, but refused to desert the ship. A careless truckman dropped a lighted cigarette in the cellar amid the waste, and the resultant bonfire was annoying, if not spectacular.

"This is simply great," Joey remarked to Mike Hogan, as that collected person

sipped a glass of lithia during an off hour in the palace of chance. "If things keep on, we'll all be dead. I've been working here for eight years, and never have we run into such a gob of horrible luck. Every time I go outdoors, I'm afraid a building will fall on me."

"It's hit me, too," Hogan replied cheerlessly. "They're getting into us upstairs. In the last two days we've lost eight thousand. These two days last week, we cleaned up three thousand."

Joey mopped the mahogany in silence for a time. Then he turned around and stared up at the empty wooden frame.

"That's the jinx," he said bitterly. "I wish I'd have been here the morning the skipper gave away our lucky bean."

He removed the empty frame, and sorrowfully smashed it to bits with a beer mallet.

"It may take off the curse," he said to Hogan.

At the end of another day, Hogan concluded that the jinx had not been removed. His reasons for this belief were convincing. Another six thousand dollars had been pried away from the establishment by the gamblers upstairs, and all the world bogged down. Hogan, wearing a deep frown, called at the Scanlon apartment.

"I've got to see Jerry," he explained to Mrs. Scanlon. "If he had seven broken legs, I've got to have a talk with him."

Mrs. Scanlon ushered him into the room of pain with a total lack of friendliness. She disapproved of Mr. Hogan and the gambling department.

"It's just like this," Hogan told the patient. "We're up against it for coin. You've got to sign a check, and it's got to be a fat one, unless the luck takes a different break from the last few days."

"What's the trouble?" Jerry asked, sitting as far up as his dismantled condition would allow.

"No particular trouble, except that we're going broke. There's one gink down there who's dragged us away from twelve thousand of our own money in three days, and he's nudging his luck along with thousand-dollar bets."

"Who is he?" Jerry inquired.

"His name is Livingstone—one of these flashy Forty-second Street sports with nine hundred dollars' worth of diamonds on him, silk socks and cream gloves. But he's there with the luck. I've never seen anything like it since I've been running the joint. All he does is to look out the window, wait for a street car to go past, and play the number. Then he puts some more of our hard-earned coin in his barrel. The rest of the bunch have been trailing him, and the result is about four pennies and a nickel in the old till."

"How much do you want?"

"Ten thousand. That'll carry us over till to-morrow night; and, if he grabs that off, there's nothing for me to do but to kill him with a club."

"Don't be a bum sport," said Jerry wearily. "We've been trimming suckers for years; maybe it's our turn. Anyhow, we'll play the string out. Nobody ever made me lay down while I had a cent left; and I'll bet all I've got that no guy from Forty-second Street can come up here and beat me out clear to the finish. Keep him playing, that's all. If he plays long enough, we'll get all ours back, and all his, too. How's Moran?"

"The bonesetters are still sitting on him," Hogan replied; "and I'm working about twenty-eight hours a day."

He departed with a slip of yellow paper bearing Jerry Scanlon's signature, which ordered the bank of deposit to come over with ten thousand dollars.

The prosperous gambler from much-maligned Forty-second Street must have welcomed Jerry's dexterity with a stub pen. It took him all of two days to enter into full and unquestioned possession of the store's relief fund; and again Jerry signed a check. As he jotted down a totally unnecessary period after his signature, a fleeting thought passed through his mind—a reflection having to do with giving away one's luck. Being a true sport, he repulsed the thought and blotted the check.

Useless, helpless, and unable to rush

into the battle that was taking place upon his green cloth, Jerry sat up in bed and received telephone messages. He caught the gambling fever, even as his wounded leg throbbed under the excitement. Hogan came for more money, and Jerry discovered that he had checked out all but four thousand. The four thousand went away with Hogan to beat the uncanny gambler—the gambler whose luck had now passed beyond the phenomenal stage was becoming miraculous.

Two more days did things for Jerry Scanlon that his wife had been unable to accomplish after four years of conscientious trying. Jerry was out of the saloon and gambling business. He had not walked out of the business, or gracefully retired amid laurel wreaths and good wishes of admiring friends. He had not profitably sold out, either. He had been picked up by the slack of his unresisting trousers and violently thrown out of the business—the business he had made—and the thrower was the calm and prosperous Mr. Livingstone, of Forty-second Street.

It was quite simple. When the Scanlon bank roll disappeared into the maw of the insatiate gambler, Hogan came to Jerry in distress.

"What'll we do now?" he said, as near to tears as gambling men ever get.

"Bet him the place, of course," Jerry retorted. "D'y' think I'm going to quit? Lump everything—license, fixtures, lease, upstairs furniture, the tables, wheels, and everything else you can find. My price for the joint is ten thousand. If he wants to—no—no matter whether he wants to play for it or not, make him. Make him play. If he cops off another ten thousand, we're through. He's the new owner."

It was even so. At ten minutes after three the following morning, Mr. Livingstone, gaunt of cheek from long play, leaned back in his chair and stretched his arms to their full extent. The room was filled with cigar smoke. A dozen men had watched the play for many hours. Before the gambler lay a pile of bills and numberless rows of little gold piles.

"I own this place now?" he queried mildly.

Hogan nodded dully, and twirled the wheel that had done it all.

"Well, I guess we'll close up for the night. Everything goes on as usual, for a while, at least. I'll take a little time to see what I'm going to do with my new business. No employee is discharged—yet."

The spectators in Scanlon's—in Livingstone's—gambling room passed sorrowfully into the night. Hogan sought a drug store, and telephoned the news to the Scanlon apartment. It was much less trying than to face Jerry. Then he went home and slept like a dead man for thirty-six hours. He would have made it an even two days if the messenger boy had permitted it. The messenger came from Jerry Scanlon, and Hogan repaired to that ruined home in response to Jerry's command—the command of a captain who has lost his ship.

Jerry had been removed to a cot in the dining room. His wife comforted him. When Hogan reached the scene of desolation, he found it bearing many resemblances to a wake. They were taking a long, last look at the corpse—Joey Brown, Bat Moran, Jerry, Mrs. Jerry, and the two daughters.

"You can see Big Mike McCarthy as soon as you get on your feet," Mrs. Scanlon was saying as Hogan entered. "He'll put you into politics, and you'll be worth a million in no time at all."

"Boys," Jerry began, motioning his wife to one side, "we're all in, down and out. Everything's gone by the board. This man Livingstone owns every board in the store. I don't know whether he will keep you on or fire you. I'm sorry we're cleaned out; but I guess it couldn't be helped. I can't promise any of you financial aid until I get some finances myself; but you can all depend upon Jerry Scanlon."

Joey Brown was weeping openly.

Bat Moran twisted his hat into a pretzel and untwisted it. A vast and uncomfortable silence reigned throughout the room.

"And to think of the way the sucker

started in!" Bat said. "I jest seen him to-night for the first time since that very first day he came into the joint. What a difference!"

"What are you talking about?" Hogan demanded, staring at Moran.

"I'm talkin' about this Livingstone guy. I'm sayin' it's terrible to think of how he started. Don't I know! You wasn't there when he first showed up, and I was. I seen him again to-night—same guy. You can't fool me. He's got clothes now."

Everybody in the room gazed questioningly at Bat Moran. Jerry recovered his speech first.

"What did you say?" he demanded, turning to Bat by a painful effort.

"I say that the guy who cleaned us out started in with a single dollar. Hogan was out. I was runnin' the table. He comes in like a bum, and I starts to throw him out. Then he flashes the bean. I wouldn't take it at first because it didn't look good—tore in half and pasted together with a bit of yellow paper; and I starts to say: 'Get out of here, you red-headed bum;' but changes my mind. He plays the red, and wins. Then he plays the black, and wins. He goes away with twenty dollars. That's the last I sees of him till to-night; and then he's all dolled up in new clothes."

Jerry was sitting up. He felt nothing of the spasms in his leg. Joey Brown was unclasping and clasping his hands and slapping them together like a demented man.

"A torn bill, pasted together with yellow paper," Jerry whispered. Then he fell back, and the pain in his leg ceased because he had fainted.

"Red-headed," muttered Joey Brown incoherently; "red-headed!"

Moran looked about him in a daze.

"Certainly," said Hogan. "Livingstone is red-headed."

"The bum!" said Joey Brown.

"God bless him!" murmured Mary Scanlon.

SUTER ON A SEARCH

EDWIN GROSVENOR, a special attorney in the Department of Justice, and Gilbert Grosvenor, a business man in the national capital, are twins, and they are exactly alike in build, face, and manner. At a banquet one night Gilbert Grosvenor mistook Jesse L. Suter, the newspaper representative of the Post-office Department, for a waiter, and gave him several orders about the food.

After Suter had thought the matter over, he felt hurt, cast down, and disgraced because he had been taken for a waiter. Moreover, he made up his mind to ask Grosvenor why the mistake had been made. But, as yet, he has not succeeded.

Every time he goes up to a Grosvenor, scowls heavily, and demands whether it is Gilbert, the reply is:

"I'm Gilbert's brother."

"I wonder," mused Suter, after one of these encounters, "if there are four or five of those twins."

ANDREW CARNEGIE'S SPELLING

IF school children took to spelling according to Andrew Carnegie's rules, they would never get out of the primer class.

Here are examples of his spelling, taken from the manuscript of a speech he delivered in Baltimore, Maryland, on May 5 last:

"Hed" for "head," "hart" for "heart," "stund" for "stunned," thot" for "thought," "honr" for "honor," "mesures" for "measures," "caus" for "cause."

And, what's more to the point, the steel king expects to have his spelling methods adopted—sooner or later.

The Endowment Fund

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "The Stroke Oar," "The Penfold Adventure," Etc.

Is it old-fashioned to honor high thinking as much as drop kicking, and to consider the professional teacher as valuable a member of society as the professional athletic coach? If so the unobtrusive college which Ralph D. Paine tells about is hopelessly behind the times

FOR more than a hundred years Denham College has been quietly doing its work of training young men to aspire to sound scholarship and manly ideals. Even in this age of the strenuous life Denham is old-fashioned enough to honor high thinking as much as drop-kicking, and to consider the professional teacher as valuable a member of society as the professional athletic coach. Nothing more need be said to indicate that this unobtrusive little college is hopelessly behind the times.

It is not a diploma factory, but a place where the students and the professors meet in small classes, and know each other well, whereby learning becomes a congenial task, and not a mechanical drudgery. The president belongs to the almost obsolete type of scholar and administrator, whose time and energies are wholly confined to the campus. He is not a good business man, a hustling advertiser, and a money-getter who can fairly drag large contributions from the pockets of the alumni, which qualifications are expected of the up-to-date college president.

It was shortly before the opening of the college year when this Doctor Jeremiah Southey became engaged in anxious conversation with the chairman of his board of trustees. At this time the president of Denham had left his seventieth birthday behind him, but he was hampered by none of the infirmities of old age. His eye was bright, and his cheek was rosy, and, take him with his snowy hair and beard, he looked quite as Santa Claus might if that benevolent gentleman were to let a barber trim him up a bit.

The undergraduates called him "Jerry," although not to his face, and they loved him as though he was the father of them all. His whole aspect was so cheery, and his chuckle so jovial, that the cares and worries of Doctor Jeremiah Southey were seldom revealed, even to his most intimate friends.

On this particular occasion, however, the venerable president of Denham College cracked never a one of his erudite jokes for as much as thirty minutes on end, and the expression of his kindly lineaments was undeniably dismal. He appeared older than usual. The tide of his extraordinary vitality had suddenly ebbed. Absently ruffling his beard with his hands, he stared through the open window at the brick buildings of the campus, severely plain of outline, but admirable in their way because of this very simplicity, which recalled the Spartan days of the republic.

At length the chairman of the trustees looked up from the mass of papers on the table between them, and ceased to make calculations with a pencil. He was a rugged, deliberate man, who faced the facts of life with a kind of grave, unflinching candor.

"Well, Jeremiah," said he, "the college finances are worse pinched than they were last year at this time. We have made no bad investments, but the

dividend rate has been reduced on a considerable amount of our railroad securities, and the litigation over the Horton bequest has been very expensive. Unless we can reduce the number of free tuition scholarships, or curtail the teaching staff——"

The president objected vigorously:

"The finest young men we have at Denham are those who are working to earn their tuition, my dear Jarvis. The freshman class will be as large as last year. Therefore we can't think of getting along with a smaller faculty. Some way will be found to make both ends meet. For instance, there is my own salary," and Doctor Southey cocked his head, and smiled with a return of his customary optimism. "You will do me a favor by giving me five hundred dollars less this year, and adding the same to the general funds of the college."

"But you have already cut your salary almost to the vanishing point, Jeremiah," and the chairman was growlingly emphatic. "This is all nonsense."

"Money is the root of all evil," chuckled the president, "so I propose to get rid of it, roots and all. My necessary expenses are very small, and I won't worry about old age. Several of the professors are ready to make sacrifices of the same kind until these little difficulties can be tided over."

The chairman submitted his final calculations, and Doctor Southey whistled ruefully as he studied the figures setting forth the probable deficit for the year. Presently, however, his sturdy figure straightened, he threw his head back, and his blue eye flashed indomitably, as he cried:

"We have two hundred of the best young fellows that God ever made, and we are going to give them the education that they expect and deserve. Old Denham isn't ready for the undertaker."

The discussion ended with this admirable proclamation, for there came a knocking at the door of the president's office, and a very young man entered with such easy self-assurance that his invasion was in the nature of a surprise. More than this, he was distinctly an anticlimax.

It would have been wide of the mark to call him one of the aforesaid best young fellows that God ever made. Outwardly he was all that a fine young fellow ought not to be. His raiment was too conspicuous to be in good taste, for one thing. The vivid purple of his tie and socks cried aloud, and the tailor who had made his clothes should have been given thirty days in jail for disturbing the peace. The youth himself was black-haired, and sallow, and of meager physique, and insignificant height, but he could have carried himself no more importantly had he topped six feet.

In the presence of the wise and mellowed old president, and the massively serene chairman of the trustees, this visitor seemed a walking impertinence even before he carelessly said:

"Doctor Southey, I suppose? How are you, doctor? Hope I'm not butting in. I'm here to take the entrance exams. Haviland is my name—J. Tyson Haviland, Junior. You know who my dad is, of course."

The young man dropped into an armchair, sprawled at his ease, and smilingly regarded the president of Denham, who was puffing out his cheeks, and quizzically eying this curious specimen of a would-be undergraduate. J. Tyson Haviland, Junior, was not in the least abashed by this scrutiny, and proceeded to withdraw from a pocket an envelope, with which he toyed while awaiting a reply to his opening remarks. Some humorous recollection banished the puzzled frown from the president's brow, and he beamed like Santa Claus himself, as he turned to the chairman, and said:

"J. Tyson Haviland! Why, bless my soul, can this be the son of little Jonas Haviland? You remember him, Jarvis. He ran away with a circus when he was a ragged, shock-headed youngster. Jonas was a bright boy, but a village scamp. He came of shiftless stock. His father never did a day's work in a dozen years."

The ornamental offspring of Jonas wriggled in his chair, and spoke up pettishly:

"Forget all that ancient-history stuff, if you please. Dad has lived it down. You've got him dead to rights, though. He's the same identical Jonas."

"I infer that he has prospered," observed the good doctor, who repented of his fling at the family pedigree, and was trying to be courteous.

"Now you're joking," was the airy comment. "Dad is the biggest man that this little, one-horse hamlet ever turned out. He didn't go to college, but he has put Denham on the map, all the same. Why, he's *the* Detroit Haviland, the chewing-gum king—his portrait on every package. And, believe me, he is worth some few bundles of real money."

The rugged visage of the chairman had become grim, and the wish was in his mind to grasp this raw youth by the slack of his offending garments, and propel him from the room, but the smile of Doctor Southey was cherubic and bland as he picked up the envelope which J. Tyson, Junior, flipped across the table.

"This is a letter from your father to me?" inquired the president.

"Yep. He expected to come with me, but a hurry call by cable snatched him to Europe on business last week. Dad is sentimental, in spots, and this is one of the spots. Instead of putting me over the route at Yale or Harvard, he was all for sending me through little old Denham, understand? He admired the college when he was a kid, and couldn't get into it. And I guess he wasn't strong for the crowd I traveled with in prep school, so it was back to the woods for mine."

J. Tyson Haviland, Junior, smothered a yawn, and let his gaze wander toward the vista of the campus. The president was rosier than usual, and again he puffed out his cheeks, but the fatuous youth paid no heed to this danger signal. The letter from the boy's father was of a tenor to disarm hostility for the moment. Doctor Southey read it carefully and understandingly.

It was a father's plea to make a man of his only son. The self-made chewing-gum magnate had turned back in thought to the sterling ideals and worthy influences of the little college of his native village, to the self-sacrificing men who labored to make it not great, but good, to the traditions which had made its bulwarks strong through generations. Perhaps he was moved also by the wish that his son should have the things which his own boyhood had been unable to share. At any rate, however crude and flamboyant may have been the soul of Jonas Tyson Haviland, Senior, he was for once genuine and admirable in this choice of a college for his son.

President Southey looked up from the letter, and sighed at sight of the young man who had been sent to him in this fashion. J. Tyson, Junior, had begun to fidget, and his curiosity now prompted him to inquire:

"I haven't heard much about athletics at Denham. Got a football team?"

"Yes, but we have done away with professional coaching, and no student is allowed to play unless his scholarship standing is excellent," replied the president.

"Pshaw! Got a glee club?"

"Nothing very pretentious," was the polite answer.

"U-m-m. Sounds pretty slow. It's all right about the scholarship stuff. I can pass my examinations, but a fellow wants some sport in college. I shall have to have a suite of rooms——"

Without further warning, Doctor Southey expelled his breath with an explosive "Pah!" and seemed to grow several inches in stature. His faded blue eyes glinted frostily, and his voice seemed to come from his boots as he aimed a truculent finger at J. Tyson, Junior, and sonorously declaimed:

"Young man, stand up. I have been taking your measure. As long as you are a student of Denham College, you are to remain standing in the presence of the president of this institution. Your manners are abominable. This campus is inhabited by scholars and gentlemen. Remember that. There are cigarette stains on your fingers. You are unhealthy and undersized. The plain living of this place will benefit you. You will report to the freshman class

officer for your examinations at nine o'clock in the morning of day after tomorrow. The campus proctor will assign you to a room. Good afternoon."

The amazed youth gasped, clawed for his hat, and disappeared with a rapidity that was fairly startling. The chairman laughed aloud, while the president, his good humor returned, chirruped blithely:

"An uncommonly unpromising specimen, Jarvis. His father desires that he shall be disciplined. What a pity that he should have given so much attention to chewing gum, and so little to his heir! A Haviland come back to Denham! I should very much like to see this millionaire who ran away with a circus."

Out on the campus the undergraduates were foregathering for the work and play of the new college year. Many of them were Denham men by heredity, sons or nephews of alumni, whose ties of loyalty had strongly endured, and who were wise enough to know that money and stately buildings are not the only essentials in the making of a college. A few wealthy families of the State were represented, but the traditions of the campus were opposed to luxurious living. The democracy of the place was sound to the core, and it smacked of bad form for a man to cause his poorer classmates to feel envious.

It was, therefore, something of a sensation when the freshman, J. Tyson Haviland, Junior, appeared with a six-cylinder automobile and a blooded bull terrier as features of his equipment, not to mention a great deal of noticeable clothing, and a brand of imported cigars.

His swaggering deportment moved the upper classmen to mirth, and although hazing was under the ban of campus opinion at Denham, the word went round that the seniors and juniors would be discreetly blind if the sophomores should choose to teach young Haviland a few lessons not to be found in the textbooks. Ignorant of this menace, he prepared to make his term of banishment as enjoyable as possible. A fellow might as well be buried alive as to spend four years at Denham, but he hoped that his father might be persuaded to allow him to finish his course at Yale or Harvard.

With all his glaring faults, the boy had a shrewd and ready mind, and a retentive memory, and he was able to maintain a respectable standing in his classes after passing the entrance examinations with ease. He was on his good behavior during the early weeks at Denham, and the president was able to write a letter to the anxious parent which conveyed that the process of making a man of the youngster was starting favorably.

The downfall of J. Tyson, Junior, really began with a series of trifling provocations. He took several mild doses of hazing good-naturedly, and even kept his temper when the gasoline was withdrawn from his automobile by night and water substituted. The solid men of his class fought shy of him, but he managed to make a number of callow friends, who were dazzled by his wealth, and were ready to rally to protect him against the sophomores.

At length, there began what was known as "the chewing-gum war." An ingenious sophomore mapped out the campaign, which was destined to make the victim angry and miserable. If he sat down in classroom without first examining the chair, sticky wads of chewing gum of his parent's famous brand stuck him fast as if he had fallen afoul of fly paper. If he hastily clapped his hat on his head, lumps of the same adhesive substance were pretty sure to be sticking to the leather band inside. There was chewing gum in his shoes when he jumped into them to race to morning chapel exercises, and melodious groups drifted past him in the evening, singing, in long-drawn harmony:

"I am selling papa's chewing gum to get along."

The unkindest incident of all befell when young Haviland was kidnaped by a band of energetic sophomores, and carried to his own automobile, which he was compelled to crank and drive to a commanding position on the campus. The hour was late at night, and several

torches furnished flickering illumination while J. Tyson, Junior, was forcibly perched astride the hood, and ordered to chew gum until told to cease.

"Entirely too slow," said a solemn young man, who held a watch.

"Move your jaws faster, freshman. There, that's more like it. He is speeding up, fellows."

"Pretty poor performance for a professional," suggested another.

"He is chewing on low speed. Squirt the oil can down his neck."

Poor Jonas Tyson champed his jaws more and more furiously, and when he halted to swear at his persecutors, one of them tapped him on the back of the head with a wrench, as a gentle hint to stick to business.

"Unscrew the speedometer, and tie it to his chin," exclaimed an ingenious lad, who was taking mechanical courses. "Chew, freshman, chew. Hit it up for a spurt. You are advertising father's gum."

His posture was ridiculous, and his labor maddening, so that the soul of J. Tyson Haviland was harrowed beyond endurance, and his foes were surprised to behold him burst into tears, and sob as if his heart would break.

"I'll be d-d-amned if I stay in this m-miserable c-college!" he blubbered, his jaws still working on the hateful piece of gum. "W-why—w-why c-can't you leave a f-fellow alone?"

The sophomores put their heads together, and consulted for a moment.

"That will do for you, Haviland," said the spokesmen. "Three of us have been appointed a committee to escort you to your room and tuck you in bed, and see that your gum is stuck on the headboard, where you can find it first thing in the morning. Don't cry. It is harmful to the complexion."

Ashamed and angry, the freshman trudged sullenly to his room, and meditated wild schemes of vengeance. He failed to comprehend that he had brought this humiliation on himself. His brag and bluster, the love of display, and a sort of half-baked assumption of manly attributes had provoked this punishment. His automobile was a breach of tradition in itself, and he used it with ostentation. He could not see that he was wrong, and the rest of them right. This was a backwoods, country college, as he viewed it, and he was the only enlightened member of the campus community. Instead of knuckling under, and learning a few wholesome lessons in behavior, he was more than ever resolved to go his own wrong-headed gait.

Tidings of the informal disciplinary measures inflicted by the campus populace on this misguided youth reached the ears of Doctor Southey, who chuckled with a most sagacious air, and remarked to the freshman class officer:

"Mr. Heyworth, I shall not ask you to interfere in the—er—the taming of this objectionable young person so long as the course of instruction cannot be construed as cruel or unusual punishment. Does he show any signs of improvement?"

"His scholarship record is above the danger mark, but his manners——" Mr. Heyworth, who was one of the younger members of the faculty, smiled dubiously, and added, with a shrug: "He is still the young barbarian at play."

"I am not in the least discouraged," affirmed the incorrigible old optimist of a president. "The spirit of the Denham campus is bound to influence him. His father's confidence in us quite touched my heart, Mr. Heyworth. Don't let the boys tease him too much. A little fooling now and then—you understand me—but no brutality. Hazing is officially forbidden." The doctor winked comically, and the freshman class officer nodded, with a smile.

Now, the youth in question had expected to be counted as a campus figure of sensational note, and his failure to win both admiration and popularity sorely disappointed him. He could make no pretensions as an athlete, and the most exclusive of the secret fraternities showed no anxiety to call him brother.

"This college is all to the bad," he confided to one of his few intimates. "I'm the only thoroughbred sport on the campus, if I do say it myself. For an assorted lot of dead ones, Denham takes

the blue ribbon. I'm about due to start something."

As one way to achieve this purpose, J. Tyson, Junior, began to visit by stealth the city of Berwick ten miles away, where there was a theater, a café or two, and a spice of metropolitan atmosphere of the kind to make a sportive undergraduate believe that he is "seeing life." It was a rule of the college that no student should go to Berwick without the permission of his class officer. And, for reasons which are fairly obvious, the official guardian of the moral welfare of the Haviland offspring was chary of granting him the said permission. The youth made the first trip alone in his automobile, slipping away from the campus in the early evening, and picking up his car in Denham village.

Nobody seemed the wiser, and a few nights later he persuaded three of his friends to go to the theater with him. There was a sort of fearsome joy in hoodwinking the college authorities, and young Jonas began to opine that life at Denham might be made fairly endurable. He was not a person of any notable physical courage, but the success of these escapades made him bolder, and patched up his shattered self-esteem. It was about time he showed those infernal sophomores that they could not humiliate him with impunity. The friends who were helping him spend his money would stand by him in a desperate enterprise.

It was in a café of Berwick, after he had treated them to lobsters and real champagne, that he raised the banner of revolt. They were to pick out a sophomore, and give him a taste of genuine hazing. Young Jonas had read many college stories, and recalled the gossip of preparatory school. Collegians worthy of the name tarred and feathered or branded each other, or bound the chosen victim alongside a railroad track. Denham was a namby-pamby place, with no true college spirit, or the fellows would show some enterprise.

To such sentiments as these, the rattle-headed companions of Jonas, who were unaccustomed to the fizzing glass, responded with vociferous ardor. Their leader was a man of the world, who had been shamefully treated at Denham. Show them a sophomore, and they would tear him limb from limb. It was after midnight when these warriors bold sped homeward. Jonas had discretion as well as valor of that brand known as Dutch courage. It would be inadvisable to select a popular sophomore, or one renowned for his brawn.

"Anybody will do, as long as he is a hated sophomore," he explained. "We'll sneak across the campus, cut holes in our handkerchiefs, and wear 'em as masks, and gag our man as soon as we get hold of him. Then we'll take him out, and show him a thing or two."

"Let's paint our class numerals on him, so the sophomores will see it in the morning," suggested one of the party. "Shall we duck him in the frog pond, or roll him down the long hill in a barrel?"

"Leave it to me," advised Jonas. "I clipped an article from a newspaper the other day—about a hazing fracas in a college in Kansas. Gee, it was enough to make your hair curl. That rolling him downhill in a barrel sounds good to me, though, as the first event on the program."

After further consultation, these pot-valiant young conspirators awoke to the uncomfortable fact that they must first catch their sophomore. To invade one of the campus dormitories in search of their prey involved a good deal of hazard. J. Tyson Haviland, Junior, had no stomach for engaging the sophomores at anything like even odds. In the rôle of a swashbuckling dare-devil of a leader he could not draw back, but his ardor was beginning to chill, and he was casting about in his mind to recall some lonely and friendless sophomore who dwelt not within call of trusty comrades.

The automobile was running slowly along the main street of the village, which slumbered in darkness almost unbroken by lights of any kind. There was much nervous whispering in the tonneau, the occupants of which were engaged in tying on their impromptu masks.

At this moment a warm-hearted sophomore by the name of Henry Wiggin was trudging along the wooden sidewalk of this same street, with no premonition of peril. He did not lodge on the campus, for the reason that his means were so slender that he provided his own provender, and cooking was forbidden in the dormitory rooms.

His modest quarters were in the cottage of one Mrs. Kenerson, the widow of a professor of Denham, who had been compelled to lay up his treasure in heaven, for lack of any surplus on earth. She mothered Henry Wiggin to a considerable extent, and tried to steer him clear of indigestion by inviting him downstairs to a square meal whenever he looked hungry and wistful. He was a terrifically earnest student, a shy, solitary youth, who lived in his books, and ran grave risk of a nervous breakdown this side of his diploma.

On this night he had been taking his turn at sitting up with a sick classmate who could not afford a nurse, and he was about to cross the street when the headlights of Haviland's automobile swept toward him. The dazzling illumination picked him out of the darkness, and he stood boldly revealed to the scamps in the car, who recognized him with a shout of unholy glee.

Jonas turned the car sharply in a side street adjacent, halted it, and hastily extinguished the lamps. A word to his comrades, and they dashed in pursuit of luckless Henry Wiggin, who had continued wearily on his way. This most inoffensive of sophomores was startled by the commotion behind him, but he did not bethink himself to take flight until there sounded horribly in his ears the bloodthirsty cries of:

"Kill the sophomore!"

"Don't let him get away, boys!"

"We won't do a thing to him!"

"We eat 'em alive!"

Henry Wiggin ran with all his might, hoping to reach the refuge of his house, and lock the door against the assailants. As he glanced over his shoulder, the pursuers were passing the one drug store of the village. A lamp had been left burning in the show window, behind one of those large, transparent green jars which are a symbol of the trade, and for an instant a baleful light was thrown athwart the masked figures of Jonas and his friends. The glimpse shocked and frightened Henry Wiggin, who was a bundle of nerves. He had little physical strength and endurance, and he could think of nothing but to run harder and faster. His heart was thumping painfully, and his breath came in gasps, while those behind him came nearer and nearer, and uttered more alarming threats than ever.

The goal of the hunted sophomore was not far distant, and his legs carried him with more agility than he had ever dreamed was in them. With a burst of speed that was fairly prodigious, he flew toward the cottage, stumbled across the porch, wrenched open the front door, and locked it behind him just as the freshmen came charging through the gate of the little yard. Filled with foolish pride of leadership, and eager to vindicate his prowess, Haviland had no notion of being balked of his prey.

"Come on, fellows!" he shouted, waving his arms. "We've got to have him. All together, now. Down with the door!"

Three of them drove against the paneled door with their shoulders, and the lock gave way, with a splintering crash. Henry Wiggin had fled to his attic room, and thought himself safe, only for a moment. Then he heard the door give way, and the sounds of the invaders coming upstairs pell-mell.

"He lives in the top of the house," cried one freshman.

"Here's the gag," said another. "A handful of cotton waste and my suspenders will keep him mum."

"I know where there's an empty barrel," yelled another. "We'll roll him downhill first."

"Let's strip him and paint him green," suggested a third ruffian. "I can steal a can of paint."

The hunted sophomore heard these threats, as it was intended that he should, and he wildly tried to barricade himself behind his scanty furniture.

This kind of hazing was unheard of at Denham, and the trembling victim was in the grip of panic fear. As the young cowards burst in upon him, he made a feeble resistance, and was thrown to the floor, his head striking the sharp corner of a bookshelf. The blow dazed him, and he was almost limp in the hands of his captors as they applied the gag with unnecessary violence.

The Widow Kenerson had been awakened by the demolition of her front door, and, surmising that this was an undergraduate outbreak rather than the assault of a burglar, she made an exceedingly hasty toilet, and sallied into the hall, lamp in hand. The uproar in the attic room had subsided, and the freshmen were trying to make a quiet exit as they shuffled toward the stairs, carrying the helpless form of Henry Wiggin between them. Afraid of no Denham students that ever lived, the widow advanced to scrutinize the lawless visitors, and took note that their faces were masked.

"Shame on you!" she exclaimed, blocking the foot of the stairs. "I shall report every one of you to Doctor Southey if I have to tear those handkerchiefs off your faces. You take Henry Wiggin back to his room this instant. How dare you break into my house in the middle of the night? That poor boy is worn out and half sick already. You will be the death of him!"

During his spoiled, mishandled childhood, J. Tyson Haviland, Junior, had not learned to respect the feelings of any one. Money was the god he had been taught to reverence. The raw streak in him was more flagrantly revealed than ever as he sang out to his companions:

"Don't mind the old lady. She's trying to bluff us. Hurry up, now. Let's get out of here and make ourselves scarce."

The widow had no intention of retreating. Maintaining her position in the hallway, she called out anxiously:

"Have they hurt you, Henry? What are you groaning for?"

Before the maltreated sophomore could make a feeble response, the freshmen had carried him, with much difficulty, as far as the foot of the stairs, where farther progress was barred by the militant figure of the gray-haired Widow Kenerson.

With a careless laugh, Haviland tried to brush her to one side. In her righteous indignation, she seized him by the collar, and shook him until his teeth rattled, for she was a woman of great vigor and resolution. He endeavored to escape her grasp, and, in the scuffle, the lamp which she still clutched in the other hand was struck a violent blow, and knocked to the floor.

The glass base was shattered, and the flaming wick ignited the kerosene, which had been spattered over the rag carpeting. In an instant the fire was running across the hall, and licking at the painted woodwork of the old-fashioned wainscoting. Mrs. Kenerson screamed, picked up her skirts, and ran toward the open front door. The freshmen lost all presence of mind, if they had ever possessed any, and scrambled for the same exit, coughing and choking from the smoke.

With one redeeming flash of manliness, Haviland delayed to drag Henry Wiggin past the zone of fire, at which the sophomore regained his wits sufficiently to stagger after the others, and fall exhausted on the grass of the door-yard.

It so happened that the captain of the Denham football team was spending the night with a chum who lodged next door. They had been studying until a late hour to cram for a coming examination, and the athlete, Folsom by name, had decided to arise early, and have another joint tussle with the text-books. He was a heavy sleeper, and for a few minutes he had fancied he was dreaming of some kind of a commotion near by. Becoming awake, he had comprehended that a riot was in progress in the Kenerson cottage, and, after prodding his chum, and yelling to him to follow, the brawny Folsom pranced out into the night, barefooted, clad only in nightshirt and trousers.

He reached the scene in time to

bump into J. Tyson, Junior, whom he promptly felled with a right-hand swing to the jaw, whereupon that warlike youth curled up on the grass beside Henry Wiggin as if he had been struck by lightning. The other freshmen thereupon took to their heels, and were seen no more.

Bounding into the house, the football captain smelled smoke, and discerned the flicker of fire. Without hesitation, he ran into the kitchen, while the widow cried after him that the sink and water pail were just to the right of the door. He found them and the faucet, after a little fumbling, and became an incredibly active bucket brigade of one. Presently he was reënforced by his chum, who was also a person of resource and courage, and between them they soon subdued the conflagration, which was nipped in the bud, as it were.

Meanwhile Mrs. Kenerson had lighted a lantern, which she gave to Folsom, who strode outdoors, and proceeded to inspect the two recumbent figures on the grass. A word or two from the widow explained the presence of Henry Wiggin, at which the athlete murmured his sympathy, and turned to scrutinize that fallen hero, J. Tyson Haviland, Junior. Pulling the handkerchief from the face of this captive, Folsom snorted indignantly:

"The chewing-gum pest! I wish I had hit him harder."

"If you had, you would have knocked his block off," observed the chum. "So they were going to haze this poor wisp of a Henry Wiggin! Have you looked him over? Is he hurt?"

"His head is cut, and he appears to have fainted," said the athlete. "Cold water may bring him around. I'll attend to him while you stand guard over this young blackguard of a freshman. Don't let him get away."

Henry Wiggin soon came to himself, and tried to walk into the house, but when he had gone a few steps he leaned so heavily against the man who had an arm around him that Mrs. Kenerson expostulated:

"Better put him on the sofa in the parlor, and one of you boys must go for the doctor. He acts as if his head had been jarred more than we thought."

While Folsom was engaged in this deed of mercy, the chum was addressed by the reviving Haviland, who sat up and inquired, in wavering accents:

"Where am I at, and what happened?"

"You got what was coming to you, and there will be some more of it tomorrow," severely answered the captor. "Hi, Bill Folsom, this freshman of yours has come to. What do you want to do with him?"

Folsom, who was setting out to find the doctor, flung back:

"Take him to your house, and throw him into the coal cellar overnight. If you can't lock the cellar door, nail it up."

His head still ringing, his jaw so sore that speech was painful, and his spirit so completely broken that he had no fight left in him, the heir to the Haviland millions was ignominiously dragged to the dungeon indicated, and bundled therein with energetic dispatch. While he sniveled and swore in his solitary confinement, the doctor took stock of Henry Wiggin's casualties, and diagnosed the case as nervous shock and a slight concussion of the brain. He was to be kept in bed for several days, whereupon the Widow Kenerson ordered him to be carried into her spare room, and announced that she intended to nurse him herself.

At nine o'clock next morning, the venerable President Jeremiah Southey was seated at his desk. He had opened such of the mail as might require his personal attention, and surely no bad news could have come to him, for never had the expression of his benignant countenance radiated more cherubic good humor. Now he whistled, and again he hummed the refrain of a college song, and once he wiped his eyes as if his emotions were of a kind to make a man cry for sheer gladness. At length, this diverting old gentleman fell upon his knees, and buried his face in his hands, while he mur-

mured a devoutly earnest prayer of thanksgiving. Then, for the third or fourth time, he picked up a letter from the table, and read it aloud, and almost every sentence was punctuated with an audible chuckle. The contents were as follows:

HOTEL STUYVESANT, New York,
November 8th.

JEREMIAH SOUTHEY, ESQ., D.D., LL.D.,
President of Denham College.

DEAR SIR: Your esteemed communication concerning my son, J. Tyson Haviland, Junior, was forwarded to my foreign address and missed connections. It has just now reached me on my return home, and I hasten to reply. Your favorable report of his standing in his college work gives me more pleasure than anything that has happened to me in years. The boy will amount to something if he stays with you, I am sure of it. I had a hard job persuading him to go to Denham, but I knew what I was talking about. The old place used to turn out men with the right stuff in them when I was a kid in the village.

Now, Denham is my home town, although I never got any particular good out of it, and the college is the best part of the town. I feel grateful to you for taking an interest in my son. You must be handling him with pretty good judgment. I have had a notion in the back of my head that I would do something for the college some day, but what's the use of waiting till I am dead? Now that I have a boy at Denham, and he is making good, I feel like showing my gratitude and satisfaction.

At the end of the boy's freshman year—that is, at commencement time next June—I shall turn over to you half a million dollars in first-class securities as an unrestricted endowment fund. You can use the income to put up new buildings or pay salaries. That is up to your board of trustees. I don't believe in giving money with a string to it. If you want to name a new building after me, I won't object. I am not looking for advertising, but I never dodge it. Please acknowledge receipt and oblige,

Yours very truly,
J. TYSON HAVILAND.

President Southey beamed at this document through his spectacles, and commented aloud in tremulous accents:

"A half million dollars! What a noble benefactor! It means—why, God bless me—it means life, vigor, wider opportunities for usefulness to the college; it means everything I have hoped and prayed for. I must notify the trustees at once. My heroic, out-at-the-elbows faculty shall have enough to live on. And we shall be able to make repairs, and modernize the old buildings, and perhaps erect the new laboratory. And I shall fight hard for more free scholarships to the deserving young men of this State."

This rhapsody was interrupted by the entrance of the freshman class officer, Professor Heyworth, whose manner was troubled. He asked permission to make a report, and the president was recalled to the routine duties of the day.

"Sit down, Mr. Heyworth," smiled he. "Anything serious on this bright and beautiful morning?"

The younger man answered slowly, as if he were reluctant to vex the sunny mood of the president:

"Yes, Doctor Southey. There is a matter which ought to come up to you, I think, before it is any older. There was a very serious disturbance in the college last night."

The president broke in to say, with his infectious chuckle: "Boys will be boys. Their escapades are usually harmless at Denham, Mr. Heyworth. Tell me all about it."

"Henry Wiggin, the sophomore, was brutally ill-treated by a number of freshmen. He is under the doctor's care. Mrs. Kenerson's house was set on fire, after the freshmen had broken into it by smashing down the door. I have the ringleader, who was caught in the act."

"How shocking! It sounds incredible! The young scoundrels!" cried the president. "I shall have small patience with them. There must be the most thorough investigation. Who are the guilty freshmen? What is the name of their leader?"

The old gentleman was in a breathing heat of indignation. Such an episode as this did violence to the spirit and traditions of the place. Besides this, the husband of Mrs. Kenerson had been one of the president's most beloved colleagues. Justice should not be tempered with overmuch mercy in such a case as this. Expulsion from college was a punishment none too severe.

"The chief culprit is in the ante-

room," replied Professor Heyworth. "Do you wish to see him now? He is young Haviland."

"Young Haviland," faintly murmured the president, all the color fled from his ruddy cheeks. He sat down abruptly, as if his legs had been shorn of their strength. Gazing vacantly at his desk, his eye was held by a sentence of the outspread letter of J. Tyson Haviland, Senior:

> Now that I have a boy at Denham, and he is making good, I feel like showing my gratitude and satisfaction.

Doctor Southey sighed, and said:

"You may send the young man in, Mr. Heyworth. I will hear what he has to say for himself."

Young Haviland had been permitted to go to his rooms, and obliterate the marks of his grimy night in the coal cellar, but he had not been able to recover his jaunty, impertinent self-assurance. In its place was a mien of sullen hostility, half defiant, half ashamed. The president studied this difficult freshman for a moment, and said, without impatience:

"What prompted you to behave as you did, Haviland? Had you any grudge against Wiggin?"

The youth avoided the president's gaze, and answered:

"No. I had been pestered and insulted by the sophomores long enough. It was about time for the worm to turn."

"But you have been subjected only to a little harmless teasing, because you refused to conform to the customs of the campus," affirmed the president. "Your grievances were hardly serious enough to warrant interference by the faculty. The sophomores were trying to help us make a man of you. Have you apologized to Mrs. Kenerson and Henry Wiggin?"

"I have no intention of apologizing to anybody," burst out Haviland. "I'm tired and sick of this one-horse college. I'd as soon live in a morgue. I told my father he was all wrong when he framed up this Denham proposition for me. If you are going to expel me, please get busy."

Doctor Southey surveyed the blatant youth with an expression of profound sadness and pity. This freshman deserved expulsion from college. And to expel him meant that the father would withdraw his promise of the splendid endowment fund. Inscrutable were the ways of fate that the wayward impulses of a spoiled child should stand between Denham College and a benefaction which would so greatly work for good, both now and for generations to come. It was the most painful crisis of Doctor Jeremiah Southey's long and honorable career. Could he sell his birthright for a mess of pottage? What mattered it if the amount were one dollar or a million? The same principle held true. Young Haviland must be dealt with precisely like any other freshman. The president spoke up, after a period of absorbed reflection:

"I am going to leave you here for a little while to think it over. Unless you are willing to apologize, and to promise on your honor that you will be guilty of no more misbehavior, your connection with this college will cease today."

The freshman was somewhat taken aback, but he managed to bluster: "Go as far as you like. I told you I wouldn't apologize, and I don't feel like making any promises. And I don't care what you write to my father about me. I can argue him into taking my side."

Doctor Southey moved slowly toward the door. His shoulders sagged, and his step was heavy, but his face betokened neither wavering nor perplexity. He had heard the call of unseen trumpets. His duty to the college and to himself sounded a compelling message in his ears. All the bright hopes, inspired by the promise of the endowment fund, were shattered, but he did not flinch. It was his intention to seek more information about the outbreak of Haviland and his friends, to question Folsom and other witnesses summoned by Professor Heyworth, but on the way to the room in which they were waiting he felt suddenly dazed and weak, and sat down to recover his strength.

Meanwhile, young Haviland remained alone in the president's office, and glowered at the wall. The inflexible dignity of the hoary Doctor Southey had rather awed him. The son of J. Tyson Haviland had expected treatment less harsh. Well, let the college expel him. There were other and far more attractive colleges for a young man of wealth and spirit, and his fond father could be pacified after the edge of his anger had dulled.

The freshman tired of waiting for the president's return, and drifted across the room to gaze out at the campus. In his agitation, Doctor Southey had forgotten to put away the letter from the "chewing-gum king," and it lay half hidden by the other papers on the desk. The boy, idly curious, let his roving glance rest for a moment at the desk, and discerned the slashing signature, which had such a familiar look that he moved nearer.

"Sure as I live, it's a letter from dad to old Prexy," he said to himself. "I wonder what it says about me? He wants to know how I'm getting along, I suppose. He'll soon find out, all right."

Warily the youth pushed aside the other mail matter, which partly covered the document, and hastily scanned the typewritten paragraphs which had brought such joy to the heart of the president of Denham College. As the son read the letter, his mouth hung open, and his eyes were wider and wider.

The revelation was in the nature of a violent shock. So Denham College stood to lose a fortune if he, J. Tyson Haviland, Junior, were expelled for his misdemeanors! Now, here was the kind of argument which had power to move this gilded scapegrace as nothing else in the world could. His mental processes were not slow, and he realized almost instantly the significance of the decision made by Doctor Jeremiah Southey. Carefully replacing the letter, young Jonas returned to his chair, blinked, and swallowed hard, and murmured to himself:

"Do you get that? The old fool of a Prexy is going to fire me if I don't do as he tells me. And he is ready to lose the half million for the courage of his convictions. He wasn't intending to put me wise to this letter from dad. Yes, he is just crazy enough to let all that coin get away from him. Money talks, but not here. Why, most college presidents would commit manslaughter for a half-million endowment fund."

Young Jonas appeared comically bewildered. His views of life had been shaken to the foundations. He had a glimmering perception that there might be something worth while in all the talk about the ideals and traditions of Denham. And as for the aged president, a man who could take such a stand as this had courage, and deserved respect, even though he was so blind to his own interests.

"And with that letter right on his desk, he stood up, and looked me in the eye, and passed out his ultimatum," reflected young Jonas, no longer sullen, but alert and excited. "He never turned a hair. My father couldn't lose as much money as that without turning pretty peevish."

And then the immense injustice of the situation filtered into the understanding of the musing freshman. He knew how hard pressed were the finances of the college. He had jeered at its poverty, its many economies, the seedy aspect of some of its faculty.

"And if I am fired, and I go to dad with a smooth story about this hazing scrape, it's a safe bet that he will cancel the endowment-fund proposition," he said to himself. "I can tell him that I was doing well in my studies, but that the fellows poked fun at me and the chewing-gum business, until I got sore, and tried to pay them back. It will sound pretty plausible to him, and I can just see him forgetting to give any coin to Denham. And I surely didn't mean to haze that Henry Wiggin a half-million dollar's worth."

The president was absent from the room for more than an hour. When he entered, young Jonas was oddly stirred by an emotion of genuine sympathy to note how broken and old he appeared.

"I am feeling unusually tired to-day, and was compelled to sit down and rest before attending to the business in the other room," courteously observed the president. "I did not intend to keep you waiting so long. I have investigated the case with a good deal of care, Haviland, and I see no reason to change my decision. I should like to give you another chance, but your attitude makes it impossible—unless you show sincere repentance."

The freshman felt tremendous admiration for Doctor Jeremiah Southey. Any man who would throw away a half million dollars for the sake of a principle was a hero, even though he were only a college president. Obviously the old gentleman intended to make no mention of the letter concerning the endowment fund. This was a matter for his conscience and himself to deal with. With a cheerful smile, that was friendly without being impudent, J. Tyson Haviland, Junior, exclaimed:

"I have been thinking it over, sir, and I am ready to offer all kinds of apologies, to everybody concerned. And I am pretty sure that I shall give you no more trouble. I'll promise anything you like, and I'll do my best to stick to it. I suspect that I have been several kinds of an ass."

"What—how does it happen that—thank God—I am overjoyed——" stammered the president, as he surveyed this brand so unexpectedly snatched from the burning. "You will have to be punished, you know, but not by expulsion. You deserve another chance, my boy. You have chosen the right path. I cannot tell you how pleased I am. Your father's confidence in Denham was not misplaced. I—upon my word!"

Young Haviland offered his arm, for the president was tremulous, but no longer with a burden of sorrow and disappointment. They stood side by side for a moment, while the boy said:

"That coal cellar was some punishment, sir. I hope you will make your report to my father as mild as you can consistently."

"I shall send him a good report of you," was the hearty response. "And I can do so with a clear conscience. Denham College has room for the sinner that repenteth."

"Thank you," said J. Tyson Haviland, Junior. "I think I will trot across the campus, and try to mend matters with Henry Wiggin and Mrs. Kenerson. Besides the apologies due them, I want to square damages, and here is where I distribute a small endowment fund of my own."

HODGE AND HIS "HUNCH"

WILLIAM HODGE, the actor who has made a great hit in "The Man From Home," got his start in the theatrical business fifteen years ago by walking up to the manager of a repertoire company in New York State, and saying:

"I can act."

This interested the manager, who was George A. Hill.

"What makes you think so?" asked Hill.

"I've got a hunch on it," answered Hodge, with confidence.

"Well," said Hill, "I'll play that hunch."

It turned out to be a sure thing.

A NEW SPORT IN THE SENATE

There is another star in the galaxy of dead-game sports in the United States Senate. The new one is Clarence W. Watson, of West Virginia, who owns a splendid string of thoroughbred show horses. Clarence doesn't think anything at all of taking a blue ribbon from such competitors as Vanderbilt and Moore.

When Jack Comes Home from Sea

By Morgan Robertson

Author of "The Pirates," "Down to the Sea," Etc.

Jack comes home—to discover that he is dead and buried and the insurance collected! A pretty situation for an honest seafaring man! But the complications that follow are still more awful

A MAN stood at the wheel of a small, full-rigged ship, bound in to Boston. He was about forty, but looked ten years older, for his hair was gray, and his bronzed face lined with wrinkles, while a look of deep-driven sadness overspread the whole countenance. It was the look that comes to long-term prisoners, to self-exiled miners who spend their lives hunting for gold, to soldiers and sailors on foreign stations—to all who, obeying the wanderlust, know the void of homesickness when home and loved ones are become abstractions. For the rest, he was powerfully built, and a good helmsman, as was evidenced by the skipper's lack of criticism when he came up and glanced at the compass.

Captain Haskins was a tall, angular man from Maine, with the typical chin whisker, aquiline nose, and shrewd eye of the down-Easter; but, like the helmsman, he, too, wore a look of sadness, that had seemed to increase as the ship neared port.

"Well, Jack," he said, "s'pose you're mighty glad to be nearin' home?"

"Yes, sir—in a way," answered Jack. "But I'm worryin' a little about what might have happened since I've been gone. Ten years is a long time for a woman to live. She may be dead."

"Oh, you're thinkin' about that wife o' yours, are you? 'Fraid she might be dead, hey? Wish I could feel that way 'bout my woman."

"Mine was a good one, sir," ventured Jack. "Black hair, black eyes, red cheeks, and just a spice o' temper—just enough to make her prettier. Just a few years younger'n me, too."

"Huh," grunted the skipper. "Temper, eh? Well, she's alive if she has a temper. Them kind don't die. Just married when you left, weren't you?"

"Married a week, sir. And she doused me with a bucket o' hot water as I went out the door."

"She's still alive."

"Yet I don't count it against her. Perhaps I aggravated her—reminded her that the house and lot and all the money was mine."

"Money—how much?"

"More'n fifteen thousand at the time, sir. I went out in command o' my own ship; but I lost her on the Brazil coast and——"

"Yes; you told me," interrupted the skipper. "And, with all that money at home, you hit the beach, took to their man-killin' booze, signed into slavery under their infernal peonage system, and might ha' been there yet if I hadn't shipped you. Did you write home?"

"Yes, sir; but they don't mail letters for a fellow down there."

"That money was left to you by your father, I s'pose?"

"Yes, sir."

"And, of course, as you must be thought dead long ago, your wife has it?"

"I s'pose so, sir."

"Remember your navigation? Can you take the sun?"

"I could pick it up, sir."

"Well, get control o' your money. I own this ship—at least my woman does

—and I'm makin' money with her; but I want a mate and a partner. If you want to go to sea again—that is, if things aren't just what you expected, and you want to invest wi' me, I'll take you on."

"Thank you, captain. I appreciate the offer; but—you know—the wife. Ten years away——"

"Oh, yes, I know," drawled the captain derisively. "Well, I hope you'll find her alive, and that you can enjoy your honeymoon. Still, if you don't—say, Jack Bronson, did you ever see me smile?"

"Well," answered Jack haltingly, "hardly. I can't say——"

"No; you didn't. I've forgotten how. But I used to smile, and laugh, too, before I got married. And I married for love—with a little money thrown in."

"But I got a good woman, sir," said Jack.

"And I got a hellion. That's the difference."

Captain Haskins did not unbend again until the ship had docked and he was paying off his crew in the shipping office. Then he said to Bronson:

"Let me hear from you. I'll sail in a month. You can usually find me aboard, for I never go home unless I have to."

But Jack Bronson was not thinking of a mate's berth, or of a possible partnership with Captain Haskins. He thought only of his home, the vine-clad cottage in which he had been born and reared, and in which, ten years ago, he had left the sweet-faced, dimpled bride of a week.

It lay in the suburbs, and ordinarily he would have walked to it; but the name of his street on a trolley car caught his eye; and with his sailor's bag on his shoulder and his sailor's rags on his back—for he would not go home under false colors—he boarded the car and reached his neighborhood after dark.

Though the new trolley line ran to it, the place was still a village, with its little street and few store fronts, all but one of which was dark. This was the corner grocery, and Bronson entered it, recognizing in the gray-bearded old man in charge the grocer of his boyhood.

"Hello, Mr. Wotherspoon!" he said joyously, as he dropped his bag and advanced with extended hand. "Know me? Jack Bronson?"

The hand was not taken. Instead, the old fellow eyed him suspiciously, and said: "Jack Bronson—the only Jack Bronson that I knew—is dead. You get out o' here; got nothing for tramps."

"I'm no tramp. I'm Jack Bronson. Don't you know me? Look hard at me, Mr. Wotherspoon. Been gone ten years, and thought I'd ask about my wife. Is she alive and well?"

The old man backed around where he could get a better look at his visitor's face, then shook his head.

"I don't know you. You're not Jack Bronson. Howsomever—as you say you are, and as you ask about Jack Bronson's wife—well, she'll know you, if any one will. Yes, she's alive, but, say—hold on there."

Jack had grabbed his bag and had reached the door, but stopped impatiently.

"I wouldn't take oath, now," said the grocer, "that you're not Jack Bronson, only that you don't look like him. But, in case I'm mistaken, did you ever read 'Enoch Arden'?"

"No. What are you driving at?"

"Well, if you haven't, never mind. I kinder thought that perhaps, at some time in your life, you might have read 'Enoch Arden.' I guess you're not Jack Bronson. Jack was a well-read young feller."

"Oh, go to the devil, you old bag o' wind!" And Jack departed.

His wife was alive. That was uppermost in his thoughts, and he forgot the unkind grocer in a minute. Down the street he raced, around the corner, and out the side street to where the country once met the village, but where now were newly built modern cottages surrounding the small house of his boyhood.

There it was, snug and sweet as ever, only that the vines were more luxuriant, and the bushes in the yard larger

and heavier. A lighted kitchen window greeted him; and, though Jack had not read "Enoch Arden," he crept into the yard and peeped through this window before entering.

A stout, middle-aged woman was leaning over the kitchen stove; and when she turned, with a kettle in her hand, Jack saw her face, and gasped. Could that hard, fat, and wrinkled countenance be that of his wife? Could Julie's pretty features so change in ten years as to be hardly recognizable? He had the grocer's testimony that his own could so change; but Julie—it was incredible. But he studied her close as she approached the table with the kettle, and soon, perforce, was able to admit it.

The frank stare of the pretty black eyes was gone, and in its place was a glittering, crafty look that only reminded him of Julie when, at a slight noise he made at the window, she opened her eyes wide and looked. He ducked, and approached the door, which he softly opened, meaning to surprise her. He succeeded. As he stepped in, she was pouring water from the kettle into a glass which stood beside a black bottle on the table, and which presumably held a share of its contents.

"Hittin' the booze," said Jack to himself, and with a little twinge at his heart. Then, to make light of the lapse, he spoke boldly, and advanced.

"Do I get a drink, too, Julie?"

She turned, with startled eyes; saw the rough, ragged man with a bag, and emitted a piercing scream.

"Get out o' here!" she said. "How dast you come sneakin' into my house like this? Get out! Get out o' my house, you loafer!"

"It's my house," said Jack, dropping his bag. "And that's the last thing I said to you when I left, Julie. It's my house. I'm Jack, your husband. Don't you know me?"

She looked long and inquiringly at him, while the wide-open eyes closed to narrow slits. Then she said calmly:

"You're no husband o' mine. I had a husband once; but he's dead, years ago, and I've got the insurance."

"Insured my life, did you, Julie?" said Jack good-humoredly at this evidence of thrift. "Then you'll have to pay it back, for I'm not dead."

"You *are* dead," she answered quickly. "I mean you're legally dead." Then, in some confusion and very testily, she added: "I mean you're no husband o' mine, as I told you. My husband was drowned, and I had to wait seven years to get his property. So he's dead enough. Get out o' here!"

"For the love o' Heaven, Julie!" said Jack, somewhat anxious for his identity. "Do you mean to say you don't know me? I may have changed, because old Wotherspoon didn't know me. But I'm your Jack, just the same."

"If Mister Wotherspoon don't recognize you—which I don't, either—you're not Jack Bronson." She spoke confidently, and, stirring some sugar into the tumbler, drank the toddy.

"Come, Julie, now don't keep this foolin' up any longer. Gi' me a drink, and we'll have a talk. I've had a devil of a time down in Brazil. Got lots to tell you."

"You'll get no drink here," she said, seizing the bottle and bearing it to a cupboard.

"Well, we'll wait a little for the drink, then," answered Jack darkly. "But how much did you insure my life for, Julie?"

"Twenty thou—none o' your business what I insured my husband's life for. Why don't you go? I've had enough o' you, you vagabond. How do I know that you're not meanin' to rob me?"

"Twenty thousand dollars, eh? That's what I'm worth dead. What am I worth livin'? There was fifteen thousan' o' my money in a little iron box under the bed when I left. Where is it now?"

He advanced toward a side room, but she halted him. She had procured the kettle, sizzling with its boiling contents, and stood in his way.

"If you don't get out o' my house, you robber, I'll scald you, I will."

Jack retreated. She was expert at throwing water, and he knew it.

"Well, Julie," he said, picking up his

bag, "I've come home to a home that I don't want any more. And I don't want the home because"—here his voice choked a little—"the little wife that I left in it is not a wife any more. She can have the home, but she's goin' to hand over my money; and she's goin' to pay back that insurance, too. I'm alive."

"You can't prove it," she declared unguardedly.

"I can, even though old Wotherspoon don't know me. You know me, all right, but you don't say so."

"You clear out o' this. I expect my husband at any minute, and if he finds you here he'll put you out."

"Your husband?"

"I got married again just as soon as I was legally a widder."

"You'll be a widder again if I get hold of him," roared Jack, shifting his bag to his left shoulder and making for the door.

"Here," she exclaimed softly but urgently. "This way—out the front door. He's comin' now. I know his step."

Jack swore, and plunged through the door. A tall figure was approaching in the darkness; and the sailor, disdaining to drop his burden, launched forth his right fist and caught the husband on the chin. He dropped on his back, and Jack went on through the gate, hearing, as he went, the angry voice of the man and the harsh accents of the woman.

He took the trolley back to Boston, and, being a sailor, sought a sailor's boarding house for lodging. Also, being a sailor, and in sore trouble of mind, with six weeks' pay in his pocket, he applied the sailor's remedy for trouble of mind, and got drunk.

In the morning, though he remembered that he was worth fifteen thousand dollars, he forgot it after the first drink, and remembered only his trouble, which caused him to drink more.

He remained drunk until his money was gone, when the boarding master, with an eye to his advance money, kept him until the time when Captain Haskins wanted a crew. Then he shanghaied him before the mast; and Jack wakened in the same old bunk that he had occupied on the way north.

Bitterly he regretted his folly, and found no comfort from Captain Haskins when he had the wheel on the following morning and the captain turned out for a look around before breakfast. He regarded Bronson with amazement.

"Well, you two-ends-and-the-bight-of-a-darn fool," he said. "What are you doin' here, 'fore the mast when I wanted you mate?"

"Forgot all about it, sir," answered Jack meekly.

"You got drunk, you mean. I can see it in your face. What did you drink for?"

"Things weren't right, sir, at home. She'd insured my life, and to hold the money, wouldn't recognize me. I couldn't prove it, either—that is, very easily. The old grocer, who knew me all my life, didn't know me."

"Why didn't you go to the insurance people? They'd ha' found a way to prove you alive."

"Never thought o' that, sir."

"Well, think of it when you get back. You'll have to stay 'fore the mast, 'cause I shipped a good mate—and then, too, no use o' talkin' business this trip. My wife's along with us. Took a streak she wanted to travel; sold the house, drew out all the money, and here she is."

Captain Haskins went down again, and soon a woman appeared in the companion—a short, stout woman, with hard, beady, black eyes. She glanced at Jack, stifled a scream, then stole softly toward him.

"Don't tell him," she begged anxiously. "I said nothing about you, except that you were a beggar tryin' to rob me."

"Much obliged," growled Jack. "Is Captain Haskins your second husband?"

"Yes; but he don't know who hit him."

"It's blamed little I care if he does. So"—he glared angrily at the flustered woman—"you are the wife he told me he married for her money—my money! And I'm here 'fore the mast in my own ship, while my successor is in command, and nominally the owner!"

"You don't own this ship."

"Who does, then? Whose money paid for it?"

"My money. The money I got from the insurance company."

"Don't lie. Twenty thousand wouldn't buy half this ship. Get away from here, Julie. I've got to think things out. Here comes the mate. Don't talk to the man at the wheel."

The first mate, a big fellow, heard the last speech as he drew near, and, when Julie had disappeared down the companion, he eyed Bronson sternly.

"You want to keep a civil tongue in your head," he said, "and don't speak like that to the captain's wife again. She's a lady, and if she thinks fit to talk to the likes o' you, answer her respectfully, and don't spring any o' yer ships' rules on her. I'll 'tend to the rules."

In the mood he was in, Jack cared little enough for ships' rules to hit the first mate where he stood; but as he shifted himself clear of the wheel, preparatory to the blow, he also sought a good spot on the mate's face whereon to plant it; and this inspection brought a grin to his saddened and gloomy countenance. He recognized an old schoolmate, shipmate, and rival for the hand of Julie, whom he had thrashed unmercifully for the latter condition. So, instead of hitting him, he temporized.

"Hello, Bill!" he said forgivingly.

"Hello, Bill, is it?" rejoined the other. "D'ye know I'm first mate, here? Hey? My name is Mr. Thompson. Call me by it, and say 'Sir' when you speak. D'ye hear? I'm first mate."

"I'm the owner."

"What?"

"At least I think I am. Get out o' my sight, Bill Thompson, or I'll give you a worse hammerin' than I did the night you took Julie home from church."

"What?"

"I'm Jack Bronson. If you don't believe it, I'll prove it."

"Jack Bronson? He's dead——" The mate was peering into Bronson's seamy face, and a change came over his own. "So it is. Where you been, Jack, all these years?"

"Been neglectin' my affairs. So you recognize me, do you, Bill? Well, don't forget it, 'cause there are some who don't know me as should."

"I never had anything against you, Jack," said the mate, "except——"

"Except gettin' Julie away from you?"

"Well, I felt—you know she's the only woman I ever cared for."

"What'll you gi' me for my interest in her now? I'll sell cheap."

"You will——" Bill's face lightened, then grew blank. "Oh, shucks!" he added. "What am I thinkin' of? She's Mrs. Haskins now. Say, who's wife is she?"

"Dunno," said Jack. "But I guess Haskins'll sell cheap, too."

A frowsy head and angry face appeared above the companion, and a voice smote their ears.

"Sell me cheap, will he?" it said. "And you'll sell me cheap, will you? Bill Thompson, don't you believe a word o' what that loafer says. He's not Jack Bronson; he's a low-down thief that tried to burgle my house, and I chased him out."

"You did that, all right, Julie," said Jack, while Thompson again peered into his face.

"Come to think, you don't seem to be Jack Bronson, though you seem to know somethin' about him," said Thompson.

"He's not Jack Bronson," insisted the lady. "He's an impostor. D'you think I wouldn't know my poor, dear, first husband, who was drowned?"

"What's this?" came another voice in the companion; and Captain Haskins crowded up past the woman. "Your first husband? You never told me you were a widow."

"'Cause it was none o' your business," she snapped.

"Well, I think it should be my business," rejoined Haskins warmly. "The woman I marry——"

"You married me for my money?" she interrupted.

"Well, not——"

"You did," she screamed. "And I married Jack Bronson for his money."

"You didn't let on," said Jack softly and gloomily.

"And Bill Thompson's worth a dozen o' the pair o' ye," she added.

"No, he isn't," answered Jack. "I can lick him with one hand."

"Wasn't speakin' o' you," she rejoined, glaring at Jack.

"Now, here," said the captain firmly. "Stop all this talk, and get down to breakfast. Come, Julie. Down below."

"I won't," she shrieked. "I'm going to talk all I want to. I'm not going to be slandered, and sold, and passed on, I tell you. I'm a decent woman, George Haskins, and"—here her emotions welled up in a volume of words that merged together—"I'mnotgoingtostand anymoreofthis Igotmoneyofmyowninde-pendento'anyyouevermadeand——"

"Shut up!" roared Captain Haskins, while Jack braced the wheel with his knee and stopped his ears with his fingers. "Hold your tongue and get below. I'm master here, if not at home. Down wi' you." And, while the mate looked on angrily and Jack indifferently, he pushed her down the stairs. Then he turned to Jack with a troubled face.

"Have I got this right?" he said. "Is this the wife you were telling me about?"

"Sure," answered Jack; "but she won't admit it. Bill Thompson here, he knows me, too, but he won't admit it, either."

"If she don't know you, how do you expect me to?" said Bill.

"Did you know my wife before I married her?" asked Haskins of Bill.

"I did, captain," answered Bill respectfully but earnestly. "And I was at sea when you appeared, or you wouldn't ha' got her."

"Did you want her?"

"I did, sir."

"Wants her now?" added Jack. "It lets us both out, captain."

"Now, here," said Haskins irritably, "don't forget, my man, that your position isn't proven, and that you're 'fore the mast in my ship——"

"*My* ship."

"In my ship, I said," went on Haskins; "and, even though you prove your so-called rights, I am the master under the law, and I can iron you if you were ten times the owner. Speak respectfully."

"Speak respectfully yourself, sir," responded Jack. "You're wearing my clothes, sailing my ship, and going down soon to my breakfast."

"What's that?" roared the exasperated skipper. "I'll tell you——"

"And when I met you comin' up my walk to visit my wife, I knocked you down," went on Jack calmly.

"You—you—was that you?"

"It was—driven out o' my own house to make room for you. My house, with the little front room, and the rockin'-chair with the mended leg—I mended it—and the little bedroom overhead——"

"Shut up! I see you know something about that house; but—— Great cats, do I stand to lose all I've got!"

"Oh, no, captain," answered Jack encouragingly. "You've got Julie."

Haskins let loose a stream of nautical profanity, and went down to his breakfast.

"Say, Jack," said the mate hurriedly, as he prepared to follow. "Never mind what I say before Julie. I'll prove you're Jack Bronson, all right. I want to get rid o' Haskins. You don't want Julie, do you?"

"Not on your life, Bill. I want my money."

"All right. It'll all work out." And Bill went to breakfast.

But Bill's good offices were not needed. Captain Haskins came up shortly, and said, with dignity: "I find that my wife deceived me, never letting me know that she had married before. Of course, our marriage is void, but yours still stands. You are her legal husband."

"Not in a thousand years!" shouted Jack. "She's your wife, not mine."

"She is your wife."

"She's yours. You married her last."

"And you married her first. She is not a bigamist, for you were legally dead when she married me."

"Am I legally alive now?" asked Jack.

"Yes."

"Then I'll sue for divorce."

"That is an entirely different matter. I am thinking of the property involved."

"So am I. I left a house and lot and fifteen thousand in her care."

"And it has increased in value. The increase is mine."

"You can fight that out with her. How much is left when you take out the twenty thousand life insurance she got on me?"

"Did she insure your life for that?" asked Haskins blankly.

"So she says. Maybe she insured my ship, too. I didn't ask that."

"If she did, it is your money, not hers."

Eight bells struck on the cabin clock. Jack rang the bell, and soon was relieved from the wheel. He went forward to his "cracker hash" breakfast, and got acquainted with his watch mates. They were the usual kind of seamen that man American ships, drawn from all nationalities, and more or less "able," according to their acquaintance with the language and the ship's rig.

Jack fraternized, but knew better than to advance any property claims in the forecastle. He turned in, musing on the situation, and wakened at noon with one point clear in his mind. Captain Haskins, his world dropped from under him, was undoubtedly honest; otherwise he would not so readily have admitted that any insurance on the first ship reverted to her owner.

As to the existence of such insurance, Jack had no means of knowing. He was before the mast; and Captain Haskins, calm, dignified, and peremptory in manner, chose to keep him in his place.

As the days went on, however, the thought dominated all others in Jack's mind, and he hoped for an interview with Julie, painful though it might be.

But it was nearly a week before she again showed herself when he was at the wheel; and then the ship was rolling along before a rising gale and sea that required most of his energies in steering.

The ship was shortened down to topsails and reefed foresails; and, as Jack had helped at this before taking the wheel, he was wet, chilled, and irritable; and his feelings were further harassed by the attitude of Captain Haskins, who, when Jack had relieved his somewhat incompetent predecessor, had planted himself near the binnacle, and stared the compass out of countenance. Such inspection of a new helmsman's steering is wise from the officer's viewpoint; but nothing so exasperates a good helmsman; and Jack was about to break forth in protest when the mate appeared.

"Better heave to, sir, while we have time," ventured the latter.

"I don't dare, now," answered Haskins. "We've run too long. The sea's too heavy. We'd only roll her spars out, or start a butt in this old craft if we strained her. No; we must keep on." Then he turned to Jack. "Watch out, now, and don't let her broach to on you," he said, and went down the companion, while the mate sought the weather alley.

Jack steered on until seven bells, when the watch below was called to breakfast, and the second mate came up to relieve the mate. Also came Julie, who paused at the companion to vigorously assert to some one that she did not want any breakfast, then spied Jack, working the wheel like a woodsawyer. Her face was flushed to a deep purple, and her eyes were farther sunken into the slits, while she seemed a little more unsteady of foot than the heaving of the ship warranted.

"Jack," she said mournfully, "Haskins won't have me."

Jack hove the wheel to starboard, and made no answer.

"And if you don't take me, Jack, I'll be a grass widder."

Jack let the wheel spin back, and hove it a few turns to port.

"Say, Jack, there's more money than what you left, and the life insurance."

Jack pricked up his ears, but made no answer. No man may talk to a

woman and keep a ship before a running sea.

"I insured the first ship, Jack," she went on, "and I didn't tell Haskins. I've got the money banked, Jack."

"That's good," grunted Jack.

"And he says I'm your wife, Jack."

"Yer not," growled Jack. "Yer no wife of mine."

"I am. I've got the certificate."

"I'll get a divorce. You went off with another man, knowin' I was alive."

"But you were legally dead, and I was married to him."

"Then you're his wife."

"I'm not—not now."

"Then yer a grass widder. Have it as you like," panted Jack, as he breasted the kicking wheel. "You had a good time at home, spendin' my money——"

"I worked out and took in washin' for seven years, waitin' for you."

"And when I come back you denied me, and wouldn't even gi' me a drink."

"I didn't know it was you."

"You wouldn't gi' me a drink, in my own house, out o' my own bottle. That's the meanest thing you could do, Julie. That queered you."

"D'you mean that you won't take me back?" There was portent in her tone.

"No, I won't. I'll take my money back, and the insurance on the ship."

"What'll I do, Jack?" she temporized. "What can a grass widder do?"

"Take in washin'. It's a good trade. You can earn more'n an able seaman."

The second mate approached, and she hurried the talk to a close.

"Then you won't take me to be yer lawful wedded wife?"

"I said no!" roared Jack. "Get away from the wheel."

She obeyed him. Carefuly doffing a hooded cloak that she wore, she hung it over a spanker sheet belaying pin, and floundered over the taffrail with a mournful whoop. Jack, busy with the wheel, did not see, and only knew it when the second mate yelled: "Man overboard!"

Then Jack glanced back, saw the purple face and shock of hair floating on the sea astern, and promptly dropped the wheel, which the second mate grabbed, while continuing his shouts.

Jack shed oilskins and boots and went over after the woman. In doing so, he obeyed one of the sudden, mysterious, and infallible impulses of the soul which come to us all in emergencies, overriding all reason, logic, and other mind processes, and impelling us to the right action at the critical moment. And in this mind state we may safely leave him.

All hands tumbled aft in answer to the second mate's yells, and one took the wheel from him. Captain Haskins and the mate ran up from breakfast. The ship was making a good ten knots an hour; and one look astern showed them two heads close together full quarter of a mile away.

"What can we do?" cried Haskins. "What can we do?"

"Back the main yards and get a boat over."

"Impossible in this sea," groaned the captain. "We'll founder."

"Back the main yards, I tell you," roared the mate. "Say the word, quick!"

"What do you say?" queried the captain, aroused by the mate's tone.

The answer was a crashing blow in his face that sent him reeling against the quarter bitt, from which he slid to the deck, and lay quiet.

The mate anathematized him between his teeth. "You'll kill people to get their money, will you?" he cried. "Not much——" Then to the crew he thundered: "Starboard main braces, all but four. Four men clear away the after boat on the forward house, and capsize it. Put your wheel to port easily, and bring her around in the trough."

He was obeyed; and, whatever opinion he may have held as regards Captain Haskins' seamanship and morals, there could be no doubt about his own.

He wasted few words, roaring his orders at the men in clearly understood terms; and in ten minutes, with the main yards backed and the fore and cro'jack braced to port, he had the ship balanced in the trough, rolling easily; and, while shipping seas over the rail, taking no harm.

In five minutes more a boat had been launched bodily over the rail from the house, and manned. The second mate had charge; and, as it pulled to windward, Mr. Bill Thompson mounted the mizzen rigging and shouted directions until the boat was out of hearing. Then he came down, and sank on his knees in the alley, with his face in his hands for a moment; and, when he arose, he again mounted the rigging.

"They've got 'em," he called at last, and came down, to order tackles aloft on the lee fore yard to hoist in the boat.

Captain Haskins came to just as they were lifting Julie over the rail into the arms of the mate; then followed Jack Bronson; and the three came aft together—Jack to take the wheel, for it was not quite eight bells. But he did not take the spokes until Bill Thompson had nearly rung his hand off while brokenly calling him a man, and thanking him for saving Julie.

"And why shouldn't he save me?" asked the undaunted Julie. "He's my lawful wedded husband."

"I tell you I'm not," yelled Jack. "I saved not you, but my money."

"Julie," said Haskins gravely, "the man that saved you is the man that wants you. Here he is—Mr. Thompson. If he hadn't taken charge and backed the yards, you couldn't ha' been saved by any one."

She looked at Bill, who looked away. She looked at Haskins, and he followed suit. She looked at Jack, who returned her stare.

"You don't want me, Jack?" she queried.

"Not on yer life."

"George Haskins," she said, "you don't want me?"

"We have settled that point, Julie."

"Bill, do you?"

"If I can get you," answered Bill sheepishly.

"All right, wait till we get back. We'll make these two dubs fight for the money, as they oughter, theunprincipled moneygrabbin'landsharksthe miserable lowdownrakin'sandscrapin'——"

"Port fore brace," interrupted the captain. "Get this ship before the wind." And, while the uprush of language continued, the ship payed off and went on.

THE CLOTH AND THE FLAME

CUNO H. RUDOLPH, one of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, is an inveterate cigar smoker, and has trouble keeping himself supplied with matches. He was delighted when a friend presented him with a patent cigar lighter—a mechanism constructed so that you press a spring which makes the flame flare grandly forth. The only drawback to the lighter was that Rudolph got nervous prostration because of his ineffectual attempts to make it light.

One day, having been invited to a luncheon at the White House, he was sitting in his office, with the lighter in the tail pocket of his Prince Albert coat. He moved slightly in his chair, and, for the first time, the lighter lit. So did the coat.

At this writing, Rudolph is buying a new coat and a big supply of matches.

FINANCING WITH CARE

IT has been said that women are careless in money matters. The statement is slanderous, unfounded, and absurd. If you don't think so, Shoomaker's saloon, the place where senators and diplomats forgather in Washington for drinks and conversation, can prove it to you. Among the many legends, mottoes, and clippings on the dusty walls, there is this, taken from a daily newspaper.

A Pittsburg woman to-day telephoned this warning to her bank: "Please stop payment on the check which I wrote yesterday, and which I accidentally burned up."

The Pride of Kid Caldwell

BEING ANOTHER EPISODE IN THE CAREER OF A GREGARIOUS OUTLAW

By Robert V. Carr

Author of "Kid Caldwell: Good Samaritan," "The Foolishness of Kid Caldwell," Etc.

NIGHT HAWK was beginning to assume the airs of a metropolis, and her citizens to point with pride. Especially were the boastful digits impressively leveled at the latest addition to her commercial enterprises—the Stockgrower's Bank, conducted by Moses Wulfstein, or "Old Nosey," as he was sometimes disrespectfully called.

Mr. Wulfstein was not a gentleman to excite brotherly love, but he was a good banker. Faithfully he performed his duties as the guiding spirit of the town's financial Gibraltar—a creature of fixed habits, dealing only in cold facts and figures.

The banker's face was generally as expressionless as a board save when receiving or disbursing money. When he clawed in a deposit, an almost affectionate smile found the combination to his tightly locked features, opened them, and happily displayed a panoramic view of a handsome set of gold teeth over which the low-hanging nose seemed fondly to gloat. But when he cashed a check or made a loan, his nasal organ haughtily withdrew to the seclusion of its own domain, leaving the mere remnant of an upper lip firmly pressed against its fellow, and the corners of the mouth adroop and melancholic.

It seemed to wrench Mr. Wulfstein's very soul to hand out money, and even to cause him actual physical pain. Yet he had no interest in the bank other than his salary. He merely hated to part with money, his whole nature crying out at a separation from the little disks of metal and pieces of crisp paper.

The Stockgrower's Bank was a prosperous little concern with only a quartet of local stockholders to divide the profits, yet the people of Night Hawk and the tributary country habitually referred to it as *"our* bank." Mr. Wulfstein acted in the dual capacity of cashier and bookkeeper, filling in his spare time as office boy, janitor, notary public, watchman, and messenger.

The furnishings of the bank were simple. About five feet from the entrance, a high counter ran nearly the width of the room, a gate checking its sweep to the farther wall. Beneath the counter was a drawer in which was kept only sufficient cash for the day's business, and a rusty, unloaded revolver —which Mr. Wulfstein believed would be an overwhelming argument in case of intrusion. But he rarely touched the weapon, having a shrinking horror of firearms.

Back of the counter were a couple of chairs, a small stove, an old iron safe, and a table on which reposed the bank's books and a notary public's seal. In the far corner was a calico canopy and curtain which screened the banker's personal belongings and his cot; for, combining precaution with economy, he slept in the bank. On the windowless walls were hung a huge calendar and a clock. A nickel-reflector lamp was suspended from the ceiling. On the back door, in which the key was always kept securely turned, hung a towel. Near by stood a washstand.

The front of the bank was considered

the most attractive in town, possessing a glass door set in the corner of the building to make room for the big window. A placard on the back of the door displayed through the glass, between the hours of nine a. m and four p. m., the legend, "BANK OPEN"; and by reversing it, "BANK CLOSED."

To the Night Hawkites that seemed a clever idea, preventing fruitless attempts to batter down the portal under the belief that the wet weather had swelled the jamb. To those who moved in alcoholic circles and occasionally wandered down that way, the Gothic-lettered placard was a boon—they having only to consult it to know that it was time to stumble back to the Dew Drop Inn and take another drink. If the placard read, "BANK CLOSED," it was either before nine or after four, an admirable occasion for a drink; and if the placard read, "BANK OPEN," it was a still more appropriate time for a drink.

Mr. Wulfstein was most punctual and extremely methodical. At three-thirty p. m. he opened the safe preparatory to placing therein the books and cash, took a drink of water, walked slowly to the front door, glanced up the street, sighed heavily, took the key from his right-hand vest pocket, placed it in the lock inside, and returned to his labors.

At four o'clock sharp he would again make his slow march to the door, close and lock it, reverse the placard to read, "BANK CLOSED," and resume the posting up of his books.

It may be asked *why* Mr. Wulfstein placed the key in the door at three-thirty and locked it at four o'clock. Only an unfamiliarity with his mental processes could give rise to such a question. It was *his habit;* and, once he adopted a habit, it became a fixture in his nature that naught but an emotional cataclysm could overturn.

Being the last firm to enter the field of financial operations in Night Hawk, the bank promoters had found it impossible to secure a central location. The building wherein Mr. Wulfstein pursued his daily orbit was located at the western extremity of the single row of business houses whose high, square fronts, sun-warped and weather-beaten, overlooked the wire-guarded "jump-off" of Little Cottonwood Creek. At the east end of the town, apparently discouraged in its futile efforts to eat away the rocky foundations of the town site, the stream swept north, leaving space for the Sage Brush Hotel, the stage barn, blacksmith shop, and corrals.

The street, or, rather, the road, to Lariat turned between the eastern extremity of the business row and the hotel, to pass through the clutter of houses, shacks, and tents, by courtesy termed "the residence district." Thus the bank was comparatively isolated; and, as the life of the town centered in Henderson's general store and the adjoining Dew Drop Inn, opposite the Sage Brush Hotel, Mr. Wulfstein had few callers except those on purely business bent.

II.

The Western frontier was not without charlatans of all kinds. Perhaps the most extensive branch of the ancient tribe of tricksters consisted of those whom the border branded "tinhorn" gamblers. "Big" Pete and "Slim" Smith were tinhorn gamblers, and their equals in card trickery would have been difficult to find. They took few chances. They were not above "rolling" a drunken man, or even committing murder, if the monetary rewards were sufficient and the risks small. Cattledom, except when in its cups, held them socially in lofty disdain.

The presence of the two tinhorns in the Stockgrower's Bank shortly before closing time, and after Mr. Wulfstein had opened the safe, taken his customary drink of water, and placed the key in the front door, was not unusual, since of late they had acquired the habit of "droppin' in to josh Old Nosey." Heretofore, the banker had received their friendly overtures with suspicious sniffs and locked features; but, on this particular afternoon, his metallic smile was in full display—the twain were

about to confide a portion of their winnings to his keeping.

Big Pete was at the counter, and the banker was busy clawing in the two handfuls of silver just given into his care. Slim Smith, weasel-faced and restless, slipped back to the door and down on the step, ostensibly to flick his cigarette ash on the sidewalk. As he performed that fastidious act, he darted a swift glance through the open space between the Stockgrower's and an old storehouse adjoining the bank some ten feet distant. He was apparently pleased with what he saw, for his evil visage brightened, and he stepped lightly back into the bank.

Big Pete turned a questioning glance upon his partner; and, receiving an affirmative nod, picked up his deposit slip and turned from the counter, placing his huge bulk so as to shut off the banker's view of the door.

Slim, in his turn, now proceeded to denude himself of his wealth, craftily apologizing for "such a load o' chicken feed" as he flung down enough quarters and half dollars to keep the banker fully occupied for several necessary moments. But Mr. Wulfstein did not complain, for he loved to take in money, whether in small or large denominations. In his favorite work, he always bent over in close attention, as if to use his nose as well as his fingers in the counting.

While the banker felt that a third patron had entered the room, he did not raise his eyes, so engrossed was he in counting Slim Smith's collection of small coin. Then, as he taloned the last piece of silver, two white-hot words seared deep into his horrified and quivering consciousness:

"Hands up!"

With an expression which Slim Smith later privately described as "lookin' like his stomach had fainted agin' his backbone," Mr. Wulfstein tossed his hands ceilingward, the gamblers calmly following suit. The banker, as through a haze, viewed a masked man, in whose hand was a gigantic revolver, the muzzle of which seemed to bear directly on a spot between his eyes.

"Pull that winder curt'in," snarled the bandit to Big Pete, who displayed a lumbering but willing alacrity in obeying the order. Reaching back, the robber closed the front door, locked it, and pocketed the key. A breath later, and he had reversed the placard to read, "BANK CLOSED," and jerked down the door curtain.

With a menacing sweep of his gun, that included both the gamblers as well as the banker, the robber ordered them to toe the wall inside the counter gate.

"Hands back o' yoah necks, an' don't move, or Ah'll blow yoah hearts out," he harshly ordered, his voice showing an accent unmistakably Southern. As if suddenly galvanized, Mr. Wulfstein reached the wall in two bounds, where he was at once closely flanked on the left by Big Pete and on the right by Slim Smith.

The bandit began dumping what money he could find in the drawer and safe into a grain sack.

"Keep yoah faces to the wall an' them hands up," he admonished them fiercely, as he looted the open safe.

Mr. Wulfstein scarcely breathed, so confident was he that the bandit's gun was aimed at the small of his back.

"Don't bat a eye," came Slim Smith's softly whispered injunction; but, so far as the banker was concerned, the advice was entirely superfluous.

The trio heard the robber unlock the back door and apparently address a confederate, in tones that betrayed considerable anxiety: "Heah, take the stuff an' Ah'll lock the doah from the inside an' stand guard till you-all git away." Then he turned to the trio facing the wall. "Ah've a notion to kill you-all, anyhow," he grated; "an' that's what Ah'll do if you move a hair." Then it seemed that the bandit had closed and locked the door. The banker stirred slightly.

"Don't move," whispered Big Pete; "he's standin' guard till his pard gits away."

Mr. Wulfstein, with a shudder he tried in vain to repress, lest his hands move involuntarily and he be shot down, became as a marble statue. Silence reigned in the room save for the ticking

of the clock, although the banker imagined he could hear the beating of his own heart. For interminable minutes they stood, shoulders aching.

It seemed to Mr. Wulfstein ages before Big Pete again whispered: "Have you got a gun?"

The banker's brain whirled, and his answer stuck in his throat. He was deathly afraid the robber had overheard the gambler's reckless words and would kill them all. He tried to gauge his voice to its lowest utterance, but had lost control. He meant to whisper almost inaudibly, but, instead, shrilly squeaked: "In the cash drawer."

A terrible nausea swept over him as he realized that the bandit had heard them plotting to secure a gun. In sickening dread, he awaited the thud of a bullet against his spine. Why had Big Pete betrayed him into that squeak? Why had he not left him alone when he had forgotten all about that gun in the cash drawer? The dreadful minutes passed, and it seemed to Mr. Wulfstein as if the bandit were silently maintaining a sinister humor as a prelude to their destruction.

Again Big Pete whispered: "I can't stand this. I'm goin' after *your gun.*" He fairly hissed, *"Your gun,"* whereat Mr. Wulfstein's entire mental structure collapsed.

He gave one despairing cry of, "Don't do it!" and lurched against the wall. Then, as if from a great distance, he heard Big Pete exclaim in tones of extreme astonishment and relief: "Well, I be cussed! The holdup's gone!"

The banker turned, tottered back, and dropped limply into a chair. However, he displayed wonderful recuperative powers, for the guardian of the Stockgrower's Bank sprang to his feet and bounded to the back door. Finding it locked and the key gone, he bounced back, and fell over the little stove, bringing down upon him the pipe and a cloud of soot. Undismayed by that catastrophe, he regained his feet, and, howling at the top of his voice, he frantically rushed for the front door, flung up the curtain, and began beating and clawing on the glass with his bare hands.

Slim Smith winked at his partner, and coolly proceeded to roll a cigarette.

"It sort o' looks as if we's locked in," he observed, quite calmly considering Mr. Wulfstein's tumultuous actions.

The gamblers watched the banker's antics with a strange indifference. It was entirely reasonable that they should. They had lost nothing, for the bank would have to make good their deposits. Certainly it was not their part to attempt to break glass with their naked hands, nor even to suggest to Mr. Wulfstein that a chair would be more effective against the door than his frenzied clapper clawings.

"How much do you think he got away with?" casually inquired Big Pete, working his shoulders back and forth, as they were still aching from their prolonged tension.

Slim Smith's answer was lost in the crash and tinkle of falling glass. Mr. Wulfstein's reason had returned sufficiently for him to kick out the glass in the front door. That feat accomplished, he shoved his head through the opening in much the same fashion as does the colored dodger of ancient eggs at a circus, and bawled: *"T'ieves! Robbers! Fire! Murder! Help! Help! Help!"*

Night Hawk nobly responded to her banker's fearful cries. The alarmed citizens poured out of Henderson's store, the Dew Drop Inn, and the Sage Brush Hotel. Kind hands secured lengths of stove wood and, knocking off the projecting pieces of glass, dragged Mr. Wulfstein through the door.

Slim Smith followed; but because of his vast bulk they had to spring the lock to rescue Big Pete. There was a great deal of excitement and much valuable time lost. At first it was thought that the two tinhorns had robbed the bank, and the crowd surged threateningly around them until Mr. Wulfstein managed to gurgle that they were innocent.

"Not them—no—no—no," chattered the banker, still shaken and trembling. "they come by the bank to make a deposit——"

"Sure," Big Pete broke in, "we jes' dropped in to bank a little money. Here's my deposit slip," and he pro-

duced the paper. "Anyhow, we couldn't hold up no bank without no guns." He flung back his coat, as also did the silent Slim Smith, to show their weaponless condition. "Besides," he added, in tones of deep disgust, "you don't *sapose* we'd stick up a bank an' lock ourselves in."

The crowd drew back somewhat mortified at its lame reasoning.

Since Mr. Wulfstein was, in a measure, still incoherent, Big Pete, speaking slowly, began giving the details of the robbery.

"Cut it short, Pete. Tell us who you think he was." This from Henderson, the bluff proprietor of the general store.

"As near as I could size him up, it was Kid Caldwell," declared the gambler steadily. "Kid Caldwell an' a helper. They must of had their hosses pretty well back, as we didn't hear either one o' them move away. The one in the bank give the stuff to his pard outside the back door, an' then stood guard over us fer, I should say, ten minutes—weren't it, Slim?"

"Hardly that," replied the weasel-faced one, with a showing of nice exactness.

Quite pathetically, Mr. Wulfstein, now a trifle steadier, inquired: "Was it not longer?"

"Then I made up my mind to take a chance," went on Big Pete, ignoring the banker's question, "an' go after old Mister Wulfstein's gun." He turned suddenly on the banker. "Didn't I start fer your gun when he had us facin' the wall?"

"Yes—yes——" was the eager reply. "You would have throw' your life away." Night Hawk was agreeably surprised at Big Pete's evident courage.

"But jes' before I turned," continued the gambler, "the holdup slipped out an' locked the door." Again he flung a question at Mr. Wulfstein. "Hain't that the way of it?"

The banker attempted to remember the exciting events in their proper sequence; but his mind failed to respond, and he weakly agreed with Big Pete's version. "Yes—yes—it is so—it was like Pete says. He holds us up and locks us in—yes—yes."

The crowd was apparently satisfied with the gambler's account of the affair; but Henderson seemed to be struggling with some secret doubt. "I don't know so much about it bein' the Kid," he said, voicing at least a portion of his dubiousness. "He gen'rally works alone, an' he never has stuck up no banks—leastwise none with cow money in 'em. Besides, he'd be a fool to turn the whole country agin' him. Any one knows the Kid has friends; an' it seems to me his pride wouldn't let him do something that would make 'em all hate the sight o' him." He gave Big Pete a sharp and suspicious glance.

"Well," insisted the gambler, "this holdup sure looked like the Kid—that is, what little I've seen o' him." He recalled an affray in the Dew Drop Inn when, as Kid Caldwell's gun spoke, three of his tinhorn associates had plunged into the Beyond. In dogged conclusion, he asserted: "He sure moved like the Kid—quick, suddin, an' smooth as a cat."

The crowd was considering the robbery from many conversational angles, when Henderson took command of the situation, and shouted: "We're wastin' a lot o' good time here talkin'. It looks mighty strong, as if it might be the Kid that did the job; an' there hain't much left fer us to do but go out after him. We may not git him, or the feller that Pete says stood at the back door an' took the stuff; but we kin make him blamed uncomfortable. Those that hain't afraid to lose some sleep had better git your horses an' guns, some grub in your saddle pockets, an' we'll hit out fer the Buttes. I'll send word to the sheriff at Lariat."

The crowd scattered to prepare for the man hunt; and one, who answered to the name of "Shorty," showing exceptional speed, ran between the bank and the old storehouse, and sought a tiny stable near a shack in the outskirts of the "residence district." He led forth a horse, mounted, and fairly raced toward the Buttes.

With the assembling, by tacit understanding, in front of Henderson's store, of those who were desirous of aiding in

the capture of Kid Caldwell, there was a tendency on the part of several to deplore the necessity of such a procedure.

"I wouldn't think o' goin' out after the Kid," explained a red-faced cowman, a stockholder in the bank, "but fer his tappin' *our* bank. I knowed him before he broke out, when he was a hoss wrangler about twelve year old, small, quiet, an' likable. I swear I don't see his idea of robbin' home folks; I sure don't. Don't mind him bumpin' off a few tinhorns or holdin' up trains; but this is too much of a pers'nal matter."

"Well," remarked a Two L cowpuncher cheerfully, "he's got a good start. I don't much think he did it, either. I wonder who his helper could 'a' been. If I could git to——" The cow-puncher abruptly coiled up his verbal rope to hearken to the words of Henderson.

"Boys," the storekeeper informed them, "I've sent a rider to Lariat fer the sheriff. He'll prob'ly git started at midnight—there bein' a moon—an' come into the Buttes on the south. We'll work the north end, say, by goin' in at Elk Cañon; though, fur as that's concerned, one place is as good's another in that hell's half acre. Now," he added modestly, "you'd better name your leader."

"Go ahead, Henderson, yourself," cried several in unison, whereat the leading citizen of Night Hawk bowed his head in graceful acknowledgment of the confidence reposed in him, waved his hand, and the party clattered down the dusty street toward the Short Pine Buttes, forty miles away.

Seconded by the silent Slim Smith, Big Pete, riding close to Henderson, declared with virtuous indignation: "It's about time a stop was put to the Kid. Nothin' is safe with *him* loose. He ain't satisfied with shootin' down our citizens an' holdin' up trains; but he comes in an' robs *our* bank."

"Well, I guess he didn't git much," grunted Henderson. "Wulfstein don't keep much cash on hand—sends it over to the county-seat bank, where they got one o' them alarm-clock safes. Didn't hear him say what the loss was. Git up, Jumbo." And he gave his horse the spurs, for he had little desire to hold converse with the tinhorns.

Mr. Wulfstein, still dazed by his terrible experience, was in the bank, feebly attempting to gather up the papers and securities which the robber had scattered on the floor in his swift search for money.

"T'irty-five hundred he gets, anyway. To-morrow I would have sent two t'ousand to Lariat," he wailed to the landlord of the Sage Brush Hotel, who had followed him in with several others, out of curiosity. "It is too much—too much—and no insurance."

"Well," replied the boniface unsympathetically, "there's no use bellerin' over spilled milk. If I was goin' to run a bank in this country, I'd git a sawed-off gun before I turned a wheel."

"Gun—gun—wait a minute—look-a here," burst out Mr. Wulfstein, with a slight exhibition of bravado. He indicated the rusty, unloaded revolver in the drawer by pointing at it as a schoolgirl would at a snake. "There it is, *my gun*. All the time it was there. I was runnin' the bank right—*you got to say so.*"

The landlord of the Sage Brush Hotel, utterly disgusted, stumped out, the other silently following.

III.

"Smiley" Jack was a newcomer at Lariat; but his arrival in that city, a few days prior to the Night Hawk bank robbery, had occasioned no comment. The comings and goings of cow-punchers from the South held little interest for a town that was frequently crowded with men who spoke learnedly of bad horses, long drives, stampedes, and affairs of the smoking .45. To those who cared to give him casual notice, Smiley Jack gave out the information that he was from Texas, but that he claimed Arizona as his home.

"Ah was bohn in Texas, but Ah put in some time in Arizona befo' Ah drifted No'th." His information was given with a careless swagger; but he

did not go into particulars regarding his sojourn in Arizona.

The Texan's announcement that he was desirous of securing a job with some cattle outfit was received in silence. It was any man's privilege to desire a job, and his constitutional right to get one if he could. The Southerner further stated that it was his purpose to buy a "hawse an' saddle."

Then his pale-blue eyes fell upon Big Pete and Slim Smith, whose absence from Night Hawk was due to a desire to mingle for a few nights in the more active life of the county seat.

In just what fashion the Texan passed the secret sign to the two gamblers, of his willingness to do anything for money, is immaterial; but it is evident that he did so skillfully, for Slim Smith, in a quiet way, proceeded to cultivate him. In a couple of days, the gambler had drained the Texan of his personal history with the thoroughness with which a weasel sucks an egg.

Not by direct questionings did Slim Smith get the caliber of Smiley Jack. No, indeed, the gambler was far too subtle to use so clumsy and foolish a method. Rather was it by wily deductions and in unbosoming himself of fictitious confidences that would call forth truths from his prospective tool. Slim apparently placed his life in Smiley's keeping, according to the stories he told him of the crimes he had committed. In turn, the Texan felt it incumbent upon himself to open his secret heart to the tinhorn.

Cleverly the gamblers avoided any open friendship with the Southerner. Their meetings were secret, which was entirely agreeable to the Texan, since were he once classified with Slim Smith and Big Pete, that would fix his reputation in the North. Doubtless, he thought, the gamblers, out of delicacy, did not wish to smirch his name in a land where it was, as yet, unsullied.

Such thoughtfulness on their part was not lost on Smiley Jack, and served to allay any diverting suspicion he might have had of his new-found friends. Thus the tinhorns established relations with the Southerner favorable to the launching of a project which they had had in view for some time—the robbery of the Stockgrower's Bank at Night Hawk.

"It's thisaway," elucidated Slim, who seemed to be the brains of the party, to the Texan when the plan had been unfolded. "There's no chance fer you to lose. Me an' Pete have got Old Nosey used to us comin' into the bank, an' the day we turns the trick, we'll take him a lot o' small change. We know his style, an', when the time's right, I'll step out an' give you the sign. Dodge in quick, an' Old Nosey'll never see you till you throw the gun down on him."

"What gits me," queried the Texan thoughtfully, "is why one o' you kain't stay with me."

"I've told you a dozen times," snapped Slim, with some irritation, "that it'll take two of us to handle Old Nosey. How could one man keep him busy an' pass you the sign at the same time?"

"Kerrect you are," acquiesced the Southerner cheerfully. "Ah guess you figgered it out close enough."

"'Tain't that so much," further argued the subtle Slim, "as it is that you are used to takin' chances an' kin handle a gun better than either Pete or me. If one o' us went with you, he'd only be in your way."

"That's all right." Smiley's face displayed considerable pleasure at the coarse flattery. "But let us go over the divvy up ag'in. As Ah savvy it, all over a thousand dollahs is mine."

"That's it," agreed Slim. "Of course, we know you could take it all if you wanted to. But we figger you ain't that kind. We know you're on the square."

The Texan made no reply. It was plain to him that the two gamblers trusted to him to divide fairly. Yet he made a careless calculation on what they would do if he appropriated all of the prospective loot. Doubtless, in secret ways, they would inform against him; and it would be easy to originate a rumor that would start the whole country searching for him, even though his two accomplices had done as they had agreed—laid the robbery at Kid Caldwell's door.

"Now, how about this Kid Caldwell, an' makin' him to blame foh the deal? Ah want to git that straight in my haid." Smiley rolled a cigarette, lit it, and then fixed his pale orbs upon Slim.

The gambler began with an air of great patience. "I have told you all that before; but I'll go over it ag'in. Kid Caldwell downed three of our boys when they were without their guns," he lied remorselessly. "An' if that ain't enough fer us to want to git even, I don't know what is. Of course, we'd like a piece o' the money, too; but we're willin' fer you to have the big end of it."

"Huh!" the Texan sneered slightly. "Ah thought when you tells me about that first, you'd bettah go aftah that Kid yoahse'f if you wants him so."

"We could never git him," explained Slim, with infinite patience. "He has too many friends. Say, can't you see," he cried, in sudden anger, "that by layin' this holdup onto him, his friends will git him, although we expects to join in the hunt fer appearances? No one knows you, an' they all know the Kid. His reputation's agin' him."

"Sure," broke in Big Pete, with impressive heaviness, "all you have to do is to waltz up back o' the bank when we tells you, slide in when you git the sign, clean up the money, an' make an easy git-away. They won't be no need fer you to go tearin' over the country, as we have told you. Jes' ride right back here to Lariat, jes' as if nothin' had happened. If anybody asks you any questions, tell 'em you been out lookin' fer a job. No one will rec'nize that hoss you bought to-day. He's a plain bay, an' there's thousands o' bay broncs. It'll be like takin' money from a blind man."

Still another question arose in the Texan's fertile mind. "How about this Wulfstein, Old Nosey? Will he kick up any dust?"

"I should say not!" exclaimed Slim contemptuously. "Him? That old jack rabbit? Not in a thousand years!" He laid an impressive finger on Smiley's shirt front. "When you come in an' throw your gun down on that old coin snatcher, he'll freeze so hard in his tracks that they'll have to dig him out."

Smiley laughed. "Then let her ride as she is. Ah'll do it." He scratched his head, and, with the motion, Slim dodged slightly, apparently thinking the Texan was about to ask another question; and in that respect the gambler was right. "Now, how about a watch? Ah'm all clean with buyin' that hawse an' outfit. Ah hain't got no ticker, an' bein' on time is the high card in this game." He looked down at Slim's heavy gold chain.

"H'm, yes," sighed the gambler. "I guess I'll have to let you have mine." He pulled out an expensive timepiece, unsnapped it from the chain, and passed it to the Southerner.

"I'll keep the chain," he apologized, lest Smiley deem his confidence in him not complete. "I'm so used to wearin' it, I'd go crazy without it. I'll rustle another ticker when I git back to Night Hawk." An alarming thought intruded upon the gambler's mind. "Of course, if anything starts to go wrong, you're to throw my watch away. It's got my name inside the case."

"Don't worry." The Texan's mirthless grin could not hide his sarcasm. "Don't worry. If they ketch me with *yoah* watch, it'll be when Ah'm asleep or daid. She's now settled." He shook hands with the two gamblers, and the meeting adjourned.

Later, on their return to Night Hawk, Slim Smith exulted to Big Pete: "We wins any way it goes. S'pose we lose our share o' the money. The country will turn agin' the Kid, an' we gits even fer his downin' our boys. S'pose this Smiley takes all the stuff fer himself. Does that hinder us from passin' the word along an' lettin' the country git him as well as the Kid? They hain't no way he kin ring us in——"

Big Pete raised a hand in gloomy interruption. "There's where you fell down, Slim. You ought never to let him had *that watch,* an' we'd been plum safe. There's where you made your mistake."

"Why in Sam Hill didn't you say so before I did it?" blazed out Slim.

"How could I?" replied the big man, almost petulantly. "He would have

thought that we believed the chances were that he would git caught. How could I say to you before him, *'Don't give him that watch.'* How could I, tell me, how could I?"

Slim calmed down considerably. "No, I guess you did right to keep still. But, now that you've spoke about it, I wisht I had my watch back."

IV.

The history of the individual who answered to the name of Shorty, and who had so hastily mounted and ridden toward the Short Pine Buttes following the conclusion of Henderson's talk, need not be developed in detail here. Suffice it to say, that he was perhaps the most loyal friend that Kid Caldwell possessed, and that he knew every trail in that jumbled wilderness which Henderson had so fittingly designated as "hell's half acre."

Shorty's departure from the crowd did not occasion any comment. His was an erratic character; and he rode about the country day or night very much as he pleased—cattledom looking upon the little man as entirely harmless.

As he dashed out of Night Hawk, he leaned low over the saddle horn, and muttered to his horse: "It's the one time, old boy, fer you to show what you're made of. Git!"

Lightning responded by settling down into a steady, swinging lope, his rider occasionally resting him by pulling him into a running walk, conserving his strength for any emergency that might arise.

It was a moonlight night of such whiteness that one could see the figures on the face of a watch; and, as Shorty neared the Buttes, he caught a fleeting glimpse of a horseman entering Elk Creek Cañon. He was somewhat puzzled. Surely that nocturnal rider could not be the Kid, since he was not in the habit of riding in such a reckless fashion. Shorty reasoned that the outlaw would have seen him first, either day or night, and would have attracted his attention in an altogether different manner than by dodging into a cañon.

The outlaw's friend veered north of Elk Creek Cañon and entered the Buttes by a secret, pine-masked trail through a narrow gap in the limestone. Lightning, splotched with foam, was beginning to show signs of weakening.

"Stay with it, old boy," murmured his rider encouragingly. "We've got to reach the Kid. We've *got* to find him."

The dawn found the little man on his weary horse, seeking the favorite haunts of his outlawed friend. Each sheltered and secret camp he sought, but naught but the magpies gave him greeting. In despair, he pressed on until in passing a huge rock he heard a familiar voice, soft and friendly: "Where you goin', Shorty?"

He turned wearily in his saddle, and beheld Kid Caldwell standing near his horse, which was nibbling at the June grasses about the rock. The outlaw walked over to him, a smile lingering in his dark eyes. "You look like you been travelin' some. What's up?" he asked gently.

Shorty did not reply immediately, but made an effort to dismount. So stiff and sore was he from his long, hard ride, that it was necessary for the Kid to assist him in getting his feet to earth. With a solicitous arm about the little man, the outlaw guided him over to the big rock, against which he rested while he delivered his message.

"The bank is robbed, an' the tinhorns lay it onto you. It looks like the whole country would be out agin' you." Shorty spoke jerkily, for he was very tired. "I saw a feller dodge into Elk Creek Cañon last night. Henderson an' a bunch are comin', an' they've sent fer the sheriff."

Kid Caldwell listened to further details in moody silence; and then, evidently having decided on a plan of procedure, swiftly unsaddled the foaming Lightning, which stood with drooped head, a picture of exhaustion.

"You stay here an' rest up," he ordered. "I'm goin' down to the head o' the cañon, an' see who that feller is you saw last night."

"But, Kid, they're comin' from both

ways, an' this is a different prop'sition now. They're comin' out to *git* you, an' Henderson an' his bunch are in the Buttes by this." Shorty left his resting place, and stumbled toward his friend, to voice his remonstrance.

The Kid smiled slightly. "I know how a bunch like that rides. They talk a heap, smoke a lot, eat, rest, an' waste time. They're just about in sight o' the cañon now. You're 'way ahead o' them."

But Shorty's fears would not be quelled. "Now, look-a here, Kid, you've a show fer to make your git-away. Don't you go foolin' around that cañon. Pull your freight to the Big Hole country until this blows over, is what I say; an' *do it now!*"

The outlaw's somber eyes fairly glowed with friendliness. "Much obliged, Shorty," he said softly; "but I'm goin' down to the cañon an' see who this feller is that rides so fast on moonlight nights." He reached out and shook the little man's hand. "Good-by," he said simply, ran to his horse, leaped into the saddle, and was gone.

Shorty's lips trembled, for there was in him the unselfish devotion and tenderness of a woman. He loved the young outlaw and feared for him. Besides, Kid Caldwell had shaken his hand—which always, to him, was as much of an honor as if he had received some degree of knighthood.

"The Kid'll sure have a time takin' care of his reputation this trip," the outlaw's faithful friend informed his horse as he rubbed Lightning down with wisps of grass, though so utterly spent and worn himself that he could hardly stand. "A first-class time. An'"—he added gloomily—"he may not come back from the cañon."

V.

When the Texan left Night Hawk after his successful looting of the Stockgrower's Bank, he dashed toward the Buttes for about five miles, and then turned into a draw, or dry watercourse, tributary to Little Cottonwood Creek and heading in the Lariat Divide.

Primarily it was Smiley Jack's intention to seek the county seat in pursuance of his pact with his gamblers—not because of any hair-shaded points of honor involved, but because the tinhorns had impressed upon his mind—as potters dent the clay—that it was the safest method of avoiding suspicion and capture. But now, with a good horse between his knees, armed, and equipped, and with more money than he had ever before at one time possessed, Smiley Jack felt inclined to ride up into the Buttes and leave his accomplices to twiddle their thumbs.

If the impregnable fastnesses of the Short Pine Buttes could shelter Kid Caldwell, surely there was covert there for him, also. And even if he should be overtaken by the Night Hawkites, he could tell them that he was taking a short cut through the Buttes to find work with some cattle outfit on the west side. If the gamblers were with the pursuers, he would have nothing to fear from them—since, to save themselves, Big Pete and Slim Smith must necessarily remain silent.

But about the gold and currency in the grain sack? It would not do for him to be caught with the toll that he had taken from the assets of the Stockgrower's Bank. As soon as possible, he would find a temporary hiding place for his treasure. It struck him with convincing force, now that his mental vision was no longer obscured by the darkening personality of Slim Smith, that the gamblers' plan of his returning to Lariat had held the greatest danger for him. He had entirely overlooked at the time the possibility of being detained by either a posse from Night Hawk or the sheriff of Lariat County, and searched.

He gave an audible sigh of relief as he thought of how narrow his escape had been. Surely the smooth-talking Slim and the plausible Pete had taken him for one brainless, utterly devoid of sense. And as Smiley Jack reviewed the whole affair, he felt that they were not to be censured for holding such an opinion. Then what had the gamblers done to merit fair treatment? Very

little. True, they had planned the robbery, but it was due to his daring that it had been so successfully consummated. Even if he gave them full credit for their cunning, it was he and he alone that thought of that clever and all-important move, the giving of instructions to an imaginary assistant at the bank's back door, to gain time.

"They must 'a' picked me foh easy game," he muttered; and then his loose-hung jaws came together with a snap. "Ah'll let 'em howl foh money, watch, an' all. Go it, old hawse!" and the Texan turned and galloped toward the Short Pine Buttes.

As Smiley Jack approached the haunts of Kid Caldwell, he began to consider the possibility of meeting that outlaw. Indeed, he thought such an event was now to be most desired. The Kid was familiar with the country, and, being of his own brotherhood, could not well refuse him aid. He would explain to Caldwell that he had merely *used* the gamblers to further his own scheme, and that from the beginning he had planned to join him in the Buttes. At a pinch, he would give the Kid a part of the loot. In case he did not meet the man whom he intended making his ally and guide, he would go into hiding by day, and at night by degrees drift west toward the Big Hole country, the fame of which as a safe harbor for all offenders against the law had penetrated even the remote districts of Arizona.

The Texan was not untaught in the art of taking care of himself in the wilderness; but in that, as well in all his other accomplishments, he rose little above mediocrity, as compared to such a master of elusiveness as Kid Caldwell. True, Smiley Jack was above the ordinary in desperateness, but there was a certain mongrel clumsiness about him that no experience or training could overcome. Physically, the Texan was above the average in wiriness and endurance, but still he was loosely knit. His knuckles were big and his fingers short and square. The size of his hands and feet was out of proportion to his wrists and ankles. Uneven teeth protruded slightly from a mouth habitually hanging agape in a mirthless grin —a peculiarity which had fixed upon him the pseudonym of "Smiley." The lose-hung jaw indicated not only uncertainty in action, impulsive judgment, but also susceptibility to the influence of others through flattery, as well as a ratlike desperateness when cornered.

If at a crisis Smiley Jack was uncertain, Kid Caldwell was ever surety itself. If the Texan, at times, cowered distraught with fear, the Kid ever moved through the chill realms of danger—calm, deadly, and unafraid. Unlike the mongrel Smiley, a certain sensitive lift of the nostrils of that dauntless outlaw betokened the thoroughbred. Of the panther type, Kid Caldwell's body was perfectly muscled, beautifully proportioned, and in action silken smooth. His jaw was lean and hard, the rare smile displaying teeth evenly set and white. In judgment, he was as calm as any jurist, reaching his conclusions with an intuition that never played him false; and once having reached a decision, he went into action with a deadly certainty and swiftness that brooked not of failure.

Being unfamiliar with the country, the Texan lost considerable time in reaching the labyrinth of rocks, brush, and gnarled pine at the head of Elk Creek Cañon. He felt the urgent necessity of getting out of the cañon and finding some elevated and secluded lookout where he might rest himself and his horse, and locate a suitable temporary hiding place for his new wealth.

The gamblers had told Smiley nothing of the topography of the Buttes, since he had agreed to return to Lariat following the robbery; but it was his conclusion that the cañon he had just left was the most accessible, and, therefore, the man-hunters from Night Hawk at least would be liable to enter the Buttes at that point. With difficulty he pressed on through the wilderness of huge, water-worn rocks and thick undergrowth, occasionally dismounting and leading his horse. Presently he entered a high, pine-sheltered park on the opposite side of the tangle.

There, screened by the trees, he found that he could see any pursuers coming up out of the cañon; and, long before they had threaded the maze he had just left, be beyond their reach.

After a brief inspection of his horse, which stood with hip a-sag, dejected and worn, Smiley, still clutching the precious grain sack, retraced his steps and again peered through the screen of jack pines toward the cañon. Then, as he was hesitating whether to hide his treasure and turn from his contemplation of the tangle to eat some dried beef, with which he had thoughtfully provided himself before leaving Lariat, two words, slurred together as one, softly spoken yet clearly distinct, broke the stillness of the little park:

"Handsup!"

The Texan whirled and involuntarily his hand swept toward his gun, but one of his occasional flashes of sound judgment coming to his rescue, he dropped the grain sack and obeyed the startling command.

He beheld a youth, about his own height and weight, but there the resemblance ended. In those somber, disconcerting eyes, the sensitive aquiline nose, the thin lips, the lithe, gracefully poised body, the long, slim finger curling delicately about the trigger of the gun, steady as a rock, Smiley Jack read with perfect understanding the trail signs of absolute mastery and unflinching courage.

VI.

The Night Hawk party rode at a comparatively slow pace across the moonlit wastes, and the meadow larks were already fluting their praises to the morn when they halted at the mouth of Elk Creek Cañon, to water their horses and partake of such food as they had been able to carry in their saddle pockets.

After a discussion, interspersed with lighting of cigarettes and pipes and the ruminating munching of the more leisurely eaters, it was concluded to leave a couple of men at the mouth of the cañon to act as guides for the pack train which Henderson had ordered to bring provisions from Night Hawk, and for the sheriff, who was to join them after "combing" the southern extremity of the Buttes. Then the saddle cinches were tightened, arms inspected, and the man-hunters filed into the cañon.

At the first crossing of Elk Creek, the party struck Smiley Jack's trail. There could be no mistaking the telltale freshness of those hoof prints. With increased caution, they proceeded up the cañon, confident in their strength of numbers, but prepared for quick and deadly action.

Coming to the tangle at the cañon's head, they sighted a horse, apparently tied outside a screen of pines on the opposite side of the maze. Following the low-voiced admonishment of Henderson, "Git off your horses an' take no chances, boys," they dismounted and scattered out in what, in military tactics, is known as "a line of skirmishers."

Until the equine mystery should be solved, the party concluded to follow closely the sapient advice of their leader. Of course, the horse might belong to some slumbering Three Seven rider; but that was highly improbable, since that big cattle outfit used the Buttes solely as a winter range. Cautiously, and after the fashion of deerstalkers, the man-hunters worked their way through the labyrinth.

The doughty Henderson was the first to enter the little park. He gave a grunt of surprise as his eyes fell upon what he at first thought was a dead man. But the supposed corpse turned its head and gazed at the storekeeper with a pair of pale-blue eyes whose expression of trapped desperateness seemed oddly at variance with his mirthless grin.

"Well, I be hanged!" ejaculated the storekeeper. "Somebody's tied you up like a Christmas gift."

The Night Hawk leader turned to his men, who were crowding about him, open-mouthed with astonishment and wonder at finding a man bound and helpless in the wilderness.

"Hands off, boys!" sharply ordered Henderson, herding them back from the prostrate man. "Leave this feller to me, an' I'll look him over an' report."

The party, restraining with difficulty its curiosity, grumblingly widened its circle.

Free of interruption, the storekeeper bent to his labors. A note, weighted down with a stone on a grain sack, first claimed his attention. He read it with expressionless face, and without comment placed it in his shirt pocket.

Running an investigating hand into the sack, and seemingly satisfied with the "feel" of its contents, he turned, knelt down, and began to relieve the bound man of his personal effects, consisting of matches, cigarette papers, tobacco, a jackknife, and *a watch*.

The timepiece Henderson examined casually; but as he placed it in his pocket with the note, he glanced about the circle, secretly observant of the expression of each individual. Then, with a remarkable swiftness for one of his weight and age, he suddenly arose and brought his gun to bear on the dumfounded Big Pete and Slim Smith, who, to escape the malevolent, murderous glance of the mysterious captive, had moved a little apart from the crowd.

"Git them tinhorns' guns!" yelled Henderson. "I charge 'em with helpin' rob the bank!"

For a breath, the gamblers considered the advisability of making a fight for liberty, but only for a breath did they entertain such a suicidal idea.

"Git their guns, or I'll drop 'em in their tracks!" Henderson stood grim and gray, a hardy old figure, whose attitude took on something of the rugged immobility of an ancient oak.

The party, thoroughly puzzled, but relying on Henderson's judgment, stripped the gamblers of their weapons and turned to their leader in a mood not to be denied enlightenment much longer.

But the storekeeper was not yet ready to make public the result of his investigation. Ignoring the eager curiosity of his followers, he turned and contemplated the prostrate individual about whose limbs and body was knotted a rope with many a cunning twist and turn that bespoke the work of a master.

"Who be you?" inquired Henderson pleasantly.

The captive did not answer. He merely turned his head in an endeavor to fix another vicious gaze upon the weaponless gamblers.

"Huh!" observed the chief of the Night Hawks, noting the look of hostility. "You seem to know them fellers." He jerked his thumb toward Big Pete and Slim Smith.

The helpless one declined to talk.

Henderson turned briskly to the party. "Boys," he informed them, with a little note of I told you so in his voice, "this feller on the ground an' Big Pete an' Slim held up the bank. The Kid had nothin' to do with it, only"—he halted, and the wrinkles about his eyes and mouth deepened. A gesture, covert but plain to those that knew him, told of a desire to convey secret information—a slight lifting of the hand, palm outward, a quaint turn of the shaggy head as if afraid some one might overhear him—and Henderson had gathered his eager followers closely about him. Two men, however, straining their ears to catch a fragment of the whispered consultation, stood guard over the gamblers. For a time the party whispered and examined the watch and read the note. Henderson reached back, picked up the grain sack, and it likewise was passed around. Those valuable exhibits having been returned to the party's chief, a leather-lunged and red-faced cattleman roughly voiced his sentiments.

"I want to say right here," he bawled, taking for the nonce the center of the stage, "there's no use turnin' these three coyotes over to the sheriff, *when rope's so cheap.*"

"That's correct!" "You're dead right!" "String 'em up!" The sentiments of the party seemed to feather the shaft of the cattleman's declaration and guide it straight home to the cowardly heart of Big Pete, whose heavy jowls—usually blue even when clean-shaven—had now turned to a leaden gray, even as the face of one dead.

"Aw, now," blubbered the big gambler, "I didn't do it—I didn't do it."

Slim Smith, holding a tighter rein on his emotions than his partner, gave no sign of fear save for one desperate, furtive glance about him, followed by a moistening of his dry lips with a tongue that had now lost all its glibness.

The bound man's mirthless grin became intensified until it seemed the expression of an absolute maniac. He gasped, but spoke no word.

"*Git the ropes, then!*" Henderson's voice seemed freighted with doom. "We'll finish the three of them right now. Tie Pete and Slim's hands, an' git this express package on its feet."

The rope was partially unbound from the possessor of the mirthless grin, and he was lifted to his feet, a man on either side supporting him until his circulation became normal. The gamblers, hands tied behind their backs and ropes about their necks, were lined up near the man whose malevolent gaze had had such a disquieting effect upon their nerves.

"Aw, boys," Big Pete again began blubbering, "we didn't do it. Can't you see we didn't do it? Aw, stop it, stop it!" The rope tightened about the terrified gambler's neck and he gurgled desperately, clutching for words to extricate him from the awful peril.

"Git them ropes over that big lim', there," ordered Henderson behind the doomed trio, "an' pull 'em up! Here, you Tom, Bill, an' Henry, git your horses. Saddle horns is better than hands."

A great sob burst from the tortured throat of Big Pete. "Wait, wait, wait! We didn't do it! This feller—you found —stole—Slim's watch—ur-gr-r-h—he did it—he did it!"

The anger of the accused man flared up, and for a moment pressed back his fear. He turned upon the sobbing and faint-hearted tinhorn a look of undying hatred, and for the first time broke his stubborn silence. "You dirty dawg! Ah'll git you foh that." In his terrible rage, his voice broke, as if near to tears. "Ah'll git you, alive or daid—Ah'll——"

The rope suddenly tightened.

"Pull him up!" boomed a great voice behind him. The doomed man felt the noose shutting off his breath, his face becoming congested with blood, his temples bursting.

"Ah"—he was trying to speak—"Ah'll tell all!" he managed to gasp. "Air—air!" He would have sunk to the earth but for supporting arms.

"In which case," Henderson's voice, to the man who had just glimpsed eternity, sounded restful and soothing, "we'll postpone this affair, perhaps indef'nitely."

Smiley Jack's confession was listened to with close attention. "All Ah ask now," he quavered in conclusion, the dread of the rope about his neck clutching him afresh, "is a fair trial."

"Well, son," observed Henderson, not unkindly, and motioning for the ropes to be removed from the necks of the prisoners, "it looks to me like you're more of a fool than a crim'nal. I reckon when you're all through, you won't draw over five years in the pen. But you two," he thundered, turning to the gamblers, "are only fit fer wolf bait. If I had a mite more excuse, I'd have you both kickin' sunshine now."

To his followers he presented a countenance as clear as a summer sky after a storm.

"Boys, they ain't nothin' left to do but turn over our three pris'ners to the sheriff, bein' as this young feller, here, has been so free to tell us all about it." Henderson coughed slightly. "I did think we might use a little rope —but why soil our hands, when we now has our money back—thanks to Kid Caldwell? Speakin' o' him reminds me o' something." He produced the note he had found on the grain sack. "You boys have read this, but I s'pose the pris'ners *ought to hear it.* She's such a int'restin' little human document. I'll jes' read it to 'em:

"Here's your man and money. Man with grin told me Big Pete and Slim Smith helped him stick up bank. I tied his horse so you could see. He wanted me to throw in with him. He did not know me. I leave him for you. You know way to make him talk. I never work against home folks—bar tinhorns. You can figger out rest.

"An'," finished Henderson impressively, "she's signed *'Caldwell.'*"

The Man Crusher

By Charles R. Barnes

Author of "The Sweeny Stories," "Casey, Riveter,," Etc.

It is an awful responsibility to be "a talented son" from a small town where everybody knows everybody else. Here is young Forbes, who ought to be making a name for himself in New York—but "the man higher up" counts in business as in politics and Forbes hasn't a chance

AFTER the manner of those who fail, Forbes looked for the reason of it outside of himself. And perhaps he was right in doing so. The furnishings in his dingy hall bedroom were tawdry enough to stifle ambition; the bed sagged in the middle, and had a lumpy appearance. His water pitcher, on a rickety stand in the corner, was cracked. A long time ago some one had washed the single small window that made it possible to rest the gas jet on very bright days. And any individual of a prying disposition might have found many other dampeners of genius in that doleful room. Among them was a half-emptied quart bottle of whisky, that jiggled violently on the unsteady table, whenever Forbes crossed his legs underneath.

He regarded it now with fondly watering eyes; and heaped up another item of blame against George Newton, who was the general manager of the Hispeed Automobile Company.

Newton, of course, was at the bottom of it all. A hard man was Newton. And Forbes was a genius—a wonderful mechanic—ground down by the cruel heel of the man higher up. There was but one way to look at it; Newton was made, and Forbes was—well, unmade. They had started even, both of them shaking the dust of sleepy Wicksville from their boots at the same time, the date of which harks back some eight years into the yesterday of things.

Forbes straightened out his long legs, and stretched forward a wavering hand for the bottle. There was satisfaction in his dull blue eyes as he felt its cool sides. For a moment he dallied with it, then shuddered and smacked his lips. He put the bottle back where he got it.

"Talented son," he muttered, "talented son!"

Groping in the side pocket of his greasy working coat, he brought forth an oil-smudged copy of the Wicksville *Gazette*. With much care he spread it out on the table, and ran a stumpy finger up and down the columns, until he came to a certain item. This he read attentively, pausing now and then to comment inaudibly.

The paragraph referred to him. It was done in the flowery, laudatory style of intimate country journalism, and it pictured him as, perhaps, he might have been. The type told of a boy of nineteen, handy about machinery, who had left his home to find fortune in the great outside world. It had come. Now, that young fellow was connected with the nationally famous Hispeed motor-car concern, in a responsible capacity. He was making good, and there was a bright future in store for him. The *Gazette* looked for great things from him. And it went on to add:

> Harry Forbes' mother, Mrs. Amanda Forbes, leaves for the city next week, to visit her talented son.

The man threw back his head, until the sadly unkempt hair at the nape of his neck made a ragged fringe over his soiled collar.

"Talented son," he chuckled, "talented son!"

Then he read the item through again, and vigorously cursed the man Newton. After a while he fell asleep in his chair. The vigorous banging of his landlady's able fist in the early morning awakened him. An hour later he was beginning the day's work in the assembling room of the motor-car factory.

He was foreman there—that is, his title was such. Old man Berger had helped him a lot lately, though. Maybe the job would last; maybe it wouldn't. You see, when a boy from your home town has outstripped you and is over you, he grows mean and autocratic under the poison of a little brief authority. Positions are unsafe under such circumstances.

When Forbes entered the room, every man in the place greeted him cordially, and then fell to talking in low voices among themselves. For a long time they had been anticipating a clash between their foreman and the general manager, Newton. More than once the outbreak had seemed unavoidable; somehow, nothing had happened.

This apparent postponement of hostilities had had its effect on the men. As the days passed, expectation produced something akin to strain. And whenever Newton, big, quick, and driving in his manner, happened into the department, work slackened. One could feel the tension that prevailed.

Men glanced furtively at Forbes, and hoped that he would annihilate the general manager, who was no popular idol. But Forbes only scowled, and a suggestion of quailing became apparent in his attitude before the powerful figure of the man over him. Usually the keen executive strode forcefully in, questioned, commented, and strode out again. But the men knew that it required only a word, at the psychological moment, to plunge the two into combat.

They hated Newton. Forbes hated him. But, if the man felt this animosity, he ignored it. Which independence was all the more reason why the Hispeed employees were ever of a mind to heave a brick at his head.

Newton was ice. He had no soul. He did not care for any one, save himself. There was no streak of humanity in him. The men said of him that he thought only of the amount of work to be driven out of them. Their welfare was no concern of his. They—their families—might meet adversity, but it was not in Newton to concern himself with it.

He was a stranger to sympathy—to that strain of brotherhood that manifests itself in kind acts, in thoughtful consideration, in an outstretched helping hand. He swore, he punished, he drove. Never did he compliment or reward. The best there was in a man was expected. Nothing else sufficed.

Thus the general manager drove from day to day, adding to his bank account and pushing himself toward the higher places, inch by inch, foot by foot. Some day he would control, and his rule would be absolute.

Forbes, none too steady after his night of brooding over the newspaper paragraph and the bottle, knew vaguely what the murmuring talk among the men meant. Some of them had spoken to him about Newton's frigid arrogance; he knew that they watched when the superior was in the room. And now, his clenching fists told of an erratic mind picturing the czar's undoing.

Automatically he went about his work, giving orders here, offering suggestions there, and making friendly inquiries into the home conditions of those under him. This trait in him had made him liked. The men worked willingly for him.

Ten o'clock came. The door at the end of the room suddenly opened, and Newton lurched in. He aimed his sturdy one hundred and eighty pounds in Forbes' direction. The clatter in the place suddenly hushed. Men gave over tightening bolts and tapping at adjustments to squint toward the two men. Almost instantly the noise broke forth again, as the hands felt the lash of the boss' presence. His voice chopped out, crisp and rough through his short, bristly mustache:

"What's the matter here?"

Forbes met the big man's look squarely, but he edged a step backward.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

Newton glanced at a paper in his hand.

"Ten cars go to New York to-morrow," he said, "or I know why. I told you about that order several days ago. So far you've given me six. I want the others, and I want them *quick*."

Forbes drew his thin upper lip tight across his teeth. His right hand, resting on the steering wheel of a naked chassis, trembled.

"What do you expect?" he growled. "I gave you the cars; I sent 'em all out of here day before yesterday, but they've been coming back ever since. The testers send 'em back. And why? Because we had to shoot 'em out of here too quick—we're not given time to do our work right—that's why." He fixed the general manager with a sullen look. Newton paid slight heed to it.

"Forbes," he said, searching the head of the department with his cold gray eyes, "look at that." He pointed to the hand on the steering wheel. It still shook. Forbes dropped his gaze. The manager went on:

"I know what that means. You're drinking—a little harder than usual. You've been at it now for six months. I know what is the matter with this shop. It's whisky—whisky that you take aboard every night after you leave here. The men know it, too. They don't respect you, and they won't do their best work for you. That's what's the matter here, Forbes." He stared hard at the foreman.

Forbes slowly raised his eyes till they met Newton's. He removed his hand from the steering wheel, and tucked it into a trousers pocket. Then he spoke rapidly, recklessly:

"What I do outside of this place is my own affair——"

"Not if it interferes with the efficiency of the department," interrupted Newton.

"It doesn't," declared Forbes. He waved his free arm to include the men in the room. "There isn't a man here," he asserted, "who wouldn't chop off his right hand for me!" Glowering, he awaited Newton's comment. It came quickly:

"Rot!"

Forbes' right foot went forward a half inch; his tall, slender body stiffened; his lower jaw shot out, and a glow sprang into his deep blue eyes—the dreamer's eyes that told of a creative nature.

"I know what I'm talking about," he calmly assured the general manager. "We can turn out only a given number of cars here in a given length of time. The men know it. When your order came, they tried to do about forty per cent better, because I told 'em to. But, even then, we didn't have time enough to get 'em out right. Those cars were hurried through too fast. You're crowding us too hard."

Newton looked disgusted.

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed. "It's not too much work; it's you and your habits. See here, Forbes; that order's got to be out by to-morrow." He allowed a sneer to creep into his tone. "There was a time," he vouchsafed, "when we thought there was something in you. But you got this far, and you haven't got it in you to get any higher." He turned to go. "Get those cars out," he ordered. And with a shrug of his shoulders, he slipped into his vehement stride, and pounded out of the room.

Forbes stared after him. "Huh!" he contemptuously grunted.

There was a lull in the place, following the parting of the men. The workers had expected the clash. It had not come—once more they had been disappointed. The tension eased. And soon the accustomed clatter of tinkering dinned again through the big shop.

Forbes fiddled around the place at this and that for a few minutes, until he felt that he had himself somewhat in hand; then he went about getting the four cars ready for the shipping department. He told the men to get them out; and he hated himself for it. That bully, Newton, had forced him to do it—compelled, as he had done all these years. He was the stronger man, was Newton, fearful and tremendous in the

might of his personality. He rode roughshod over everything.

During the next few days, Forbes grew more resentful. A brooding melancholy possessed him. He spent his nights in low barrooms. Once he told a bartender that he was going to "get" Newton, and the report spread.

The next day, when some of the men asked him about it, he was vehement in his denials. For Forbes had been educated. He realized that if he should do anything violent during his nightly debauches, the threat would no doubt be used against him. He became wretchedly nervous and quick of temper.

Toward the end of the week, he received a letter from his mother, telling him to expect her on Monday. He plunged harder into his dissipation, after that. Two years before his mother had visited him, and had found him apparently climbing rapidly through the shop, on his way to the top. Now, what would she find? An unkempt, haggard man, living in a cheap, dirty rooming house, out of funds and on the verge of complete wreckage. Forbes thought vaguely of preventing the visit, but the inactive tendency produced in him by his habits begot procrastination. The days slipped by. And soon it was Sunday night—late Sunday night, close upon the hour of twelve.

Forbes had bought a second-hand automatic pistol with money from his Saturday pay envelope. He tried it, and found that it popped famously, six or seven times, very rapidly, every time you put a magazine full of cartridges in it and pressed, tick, tick, tick, at the trigger.

He felt that he could write his name with it against a blank wall in about a second. Any one standing in front of it would have a mighty slim chance for his life. If the pistol were but waved up and down and set going, it would punch a vital part, sooner or later.

Forbes thought that it was just the thing—just the thing. He pondered and muttered about it all the way to Newton's bachelor apartments. His hand was closed about it in his coat pocket, as he ordered the hall boy to ring Newton's telephone. There was a short wait. Then the boy asked:

"He says what do you want?"

"Tell him I want to see him," Forbes answered craftily, "about something important."

The boy transmitted the message. The foreman heard a buzzing in the receiver as Newton's instructions came.

"He says," explained the boy, "for you to go up." The receiver was put back on the hook, and the young fellow led the way to the elevator. Forbes followed him into it, and the car sped upward.

"Third apartment back," instructed the boy, as the car stopped at Newton's floor.

"Thanks," said Forbes. He seemed unusually alert as he stepped out and started in the direction indicated. He had gone only a few steps, when a door opened and Newton's face peered out into the bright light of the hallway. He was in his bath robe and slippers. Traces of sleep were in his eyes.

"What do you want?" he inquired crossly. "I was asleep."

Forbes chuckled. There it was again. The ever-present I. Newton thought of nothing else.

"I want to talk to you," Forbes said. "It's important. I wouldn't have come this late if I didn't have an idea that I won't be here to-morrow. I won't keep you long."

The general manager gazed sharply at him for an instant. Then he backed into his apartment, and motioned the foreman to follow. He led the way to the living room, which was in a blaze of light from an electric ceiling fixture. Turning to Forbes, he commanded:

"Go on!"

Forbes placed his hat carefully on the center table. His hand was still in his coat pocket.

"I said I wouldn't keep you long, Newton," he began, "and I won't. I'll only be here long enough to tell you that you've run over me and kept me down until you've made a wreck of me. I'm going to kill myself to-night, but before I do it I'll make my successor's

way easier. I'm going to take you with me." He jerked the pistol from his pocket. His hand began an upward and forward sweep.

Afterward Forbes remembered that he heard Newton's teeth click as the heavy jaws came together. He saw the man suddenly become the background for a big, hard fist that flashed at him. Quick as the strike of a serpent was the act.

Forbes could picture it—the incredibly fast shift into position; the short, jolting jab that went under the chin and seemed to go clear through his windpipe. He staggered back, gasping and choking. Newton's heavy body was hurled forward, and crashed to the floor with Forbes. A metallic clatter in a far corner told of the pistol banging against the hard wood of the floor.

Newton pinioned Forbes' arms, outstretched, to the rug. For a moment the under man panted. The man on top was cool. Presently he got to his knees, gripped a hand in Forbes' coat collar, and jerked him to his feet. He hurled him violently into a chair, walked quickly to the pistol, picked it up, and seated himself.

"Now," he said, "what do you mean by this?"

Forbes stared.

"What do you mean?" repeated Newton.

The man who would have killed began to pick at the arms of the leather-upholstered chair. Presently he replied: "I wanted to get you."

"Why?" Newton's voice was as crisp and businesslike as if he were inquiring about something in the shop. There was no awe in it—nothing of emotion. He was the Newton of the factory, cold, hard, even.

Forbes looked up. "Newton," he began, "you're not a man—you're a machine."

"Get down to business," ordered Newton. "Why did you want to kill me?"

"Because," said Forbes, "you've as good as killed me. You crushed the ambition out of me——" He paused. "Say," he went on, "do you want me to tell you all about it? Do you think you could understand?"

"I have average intelligence," declared the general manager.

"Well, then," continued the foreman, "you listen. I'll tell you. You think I'm a failure. I am. But you're as bad—or worse—than I am. You're a successful failure. You're a success as a money-making, power-getting machine. You're a failure as a man. I'm a common failure, but I didn't drag down and crush other people to get where I am——"

Newton interrupted.

"Why did you want to shoot me?" he asked. Evidently he regarded Forbes' talk as an echo from a socialistic pamphlet.

Reaction was beginning to show in Forbes. He trembled, and his lower jaw was unsteady.

"We came to the factory," he said, "almost at the same time——"

"Seven years and eight months ago," supplemented the general manager.

"You began on me when you were foreman of the assembling room," continued Forbes. "That was three years ago. I figured out the exhaust manifold that's been such a feature of our cars—didn't I?"

"You did," affirmed Newton.

"And you took it up with the president and those fellows," the foreman went on, "and convinced 'em that it was the goods; and they took it up and it made a hit. Yes. And you pounded it into 'em what a smooth proposition you were to know a good thing when you saw it. They promoted you. And then you recommended Taylor for foreman. You kept me fooling around with the cars, hoping I'd study out more improvements. Didn't you?"

"You were a good man—then," evaded Newton.

"You bet I was," agreed Forbes, "and I'd be a good man yet if I'd had a chance. I guess you remember when I had that idea about the double carburetor—how I modified it to fit our motor. I guess you remember that. You got the principle of the thing out

of me, and then set me to work in the test department, so I wouldn't have time to work out my idea. Bassett and you worked it out. I guess that carburetor didn't sell cars, or anything! The men higher up began to think a lot of you about that time, didn't they?"

Newton was silent. Forbes leaned forward in his chair.

"Those are only two of the things you've done," he accused. "It's been one thing after another. You profited by my ideas. When you thought I was getting dissatisfied, you put me in charge of the assembling room. That was a sop. You had me thinking that I'd rise right up, like you've done. But I didn't rise. I stayed there. I've watched you, though. You didn't stand still. I'll bet you're president of the Hispeed company before long—that is, you will be, if you can bluff and scheme yourself into it——"

"Bosh!" interrupted Newton.

"It's the truth," insisted Forbes. "You'll be president, if you have to ruin a couple of hundred people—or a thousand. You don't care. I'll go a little further, and say that you don't realize what your advancement costs. You've seen to-night, what it brought me to—your selfishness—that's it, your selfishness! I've got your word for it that I was a good man once. You can see for yourself that I'm not a good man now. I've got more mechanical brains than you; you've got more strength of character than I—and you're unscrupulous. You saw your advantage, and you took it; and you didn't know or care what became of me. You are the cause of me being where I am."

Newton appeared to ponder. At length he blurted out:

"See here, Forbes; there's nothing in that. I'm where I am because I worked and attended to business and didn't drink——"

Forbes laughed, and there was a touch of hysteria in it.

"I didn't drink, either, until six months ago," he declared. "I began it then because—well, maybe I'm weak; but, if you'll stop to remember, you cut down my working force then, and began to complain to your bosses that I wasn't getting the cars out. I guess that was encouraging. They thought I was incompetent, and I began to think. What's the use? Say, Newton, the old mutt that runs the paper back home—old Wagner—wrote me up as the talented son of my mother! When I read it, I was huddled in a hole of a furnished room, an utter failure. That was only a few days ago. Maybe I got the idea of buying a gun about that time."

He stopped, and glared shakily at the general manager.

Newton seemed to have lost some of his arrogance. He was as one who argues with himself.

"Forbes," he asked slowly, "do you mean to tell me that I am responsible for your present condition—do you tell me that and mean it?"

Forbes laughed that shaky laugh again.

"Maybe I'm crazy," he said. "I suppose I am, or I wouldn't be prowling around here with a machine gun. But I honestly believe what I've told you. Maybe I'm wrong. Suppose you tell some outsider the circumstances and ask for an unbiased opinion, Newton. There might be some people who would agree that you have acted right along in a square and straightforward way—that you can't be blamed for what I am."

Newton leaned back in his chair, and folded his arms. He looked at Forbes, and gnawed at his stubby mustache. After a little while, he chopped out: "Maybe you're right."

Forbes was silent.

Newton spoke again: "If you are right, you've got something coming."

Once more Forbes laughed his gaspy laugh.

"'We guarantee to replace any defective parts within one year, if sent to us, carriage prepaid——'" He was quoting from the catalogue. "Newton," he supplemented, "you'd be funny if you weren't such a serious proposition in my life. Business, business, business! I suppose that if you thought

I'd been injured by you, you'd raise my pay two dollars a week and call it square. But some things, Newton, can't be squared so easily. For instance, here I am, and my mother is coming tomorrow. She expects to find me getting along fine—maybe owning my car and living like you are. Now, Newton, what is she going to find?"

Newton suddenly got up, and began to walk up and down the room. Now and then he glanced at Forbes, only to take away his eyes immediately. For five minutes he paced. He looked at the pistol, and without a word deliberately handed it to Forbes. And, as if it were all a matter of course, Forbes put the weapon in his pocket—his trousers pocket, this time. He settled back in his chair, and watched the big fellow in the bath robe, as he marched, marched, marched!

At length, Newton came to a halt. He turned to face Forbes.

"You need a hair cut," he presently observed, "and a clean collar and a general overhauling. But you can attend to that in the morning."

His tone was the curt, snappy, order-giving one of the factory. Apparently he reasoned that he was face to face with an emergency that must be handled. It was the same to him, judging from his manner, as meeting a rush order. Yet there was a suggestion of humility, of softness behind the gruff exterior that Forbes felt, rather than observed.

Newton thought for another moment.

"Forbes," he said, "I want you to stay here to-night. I have plenty of room. You take my guest bedroom and get some sleep. You'll need it, if you're going to look right when she—that is, when your mother comes. I had my mother on here last month, and she was worried because I had a cold and looked a little tough."

He picked up several letters that were lying on the table.

"I've got to run out to Chicago tomorrow," he went on, "and you might as well have your mother stay here. You're staying here temporarily, see? You can be moving, or something like that. She and you will be comfortable here. My cook will run the house—neither of you need worry about anything. And the next time she comes, Forbes, you'll have a place like this to entertain her in, or I don't know what I'm talking about. Maybe you were right about what you said. If I am to blame——"

He broke off, and disappeared into an adjoining room. Forbes heard him fussing about with bureau drawers. Presently he reappeared, and flung a suit of pajamas on the floor.

"Put 'em on when you're ready," he said. And once again he left the room. He did not return.

Mrs. Amanda Forbes was met at the station the next day by her son, Harry, who was all decked out in a new suit of clothes. His hair was neatly trimmed, and there was a rested look in his eyes. And, moreover, he rode in a beautiful limousine car, driven by a natty chauffeur in a fetching livery.

Mrs. Forbes liked the looks of things. She made up her mind to tell the editor of the *Gazette* about them when she returned. She was especially pleased with the cozy flat occupied by Harry and his boon companion, George Newton.

"He's in Chicago now," explained Forbes. "He was very sorry that he had to leave without seeing you. Yes, this is a nice place, but I am going to move soon into one of my own. Newton tells me that I am slated for the assistant superintendent's job—eventually I'll get higher. That means more money, and I can afford to live better."

"Mr. Newton is good to take such an interest in you," commented Mrs. Forbes.

"Yes," agreed Forbes; "Newton woke up—that is, I mean he is a wide-awake man, always on the alert for talented people. He——"

The only cloud on Mrs. Forbes' visit was this: Harry said that he couldn't bring her any socks to mend, because he always threw 'em away when they got holes in 'em.

The Isle of Strife

By George C. Shedd

Author of "The Princess of Forge," Etc.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TALE THAT PILON TOLD.

AT about three o'clock Pilon was called to the stand to give his account of my alleged crime. While an examination into the subject of the map was essential, this was the main purpose of the investigation. There was a shifting closer of seats, a settling of bodies, and a craning of heads. Old Gaspard whittled his quill pen anew for larger writing. Pilon, full of confidence, swelling with importance now that he was the center of observation, cocked his head on one side and gazed at the ceiling, awaiting the pleasure of the mayor.

The latter announced that Descarte was dead; there could be no doubt on that point, for he lay in the lower room of Pilon's house, where he had been viewed by many. Yes, it was certain that he was dead. Of the manner of his death there also was no question, since the knife which had slain him still remained in his back. It was charged that I had murdered him; I admitted that I had slain him. Was this not the case, Monsieur Woodworth? It was, as I answered, but I denied the murder. Therefore, the cause and nature of the killing was to be determined. Hence this investigation.

Pilon was ordered to speak.

"Monsieur Woodworth is guilty, and a great rascal," said he complacently.

The mayor rapped the table.

"You're not to pass judgment, but to give evidence. Begin at the beginning."

"Where is the beginning, Monsieur the Mayor?" Pilon inquired, with calmness.

That was, in truth, a question, unless we were to start over again with my arrival upon the island. However, after musing on the matter briefly, Surçon said the witness should begin with the morning when a watch was set upon the movements of the German and me. There was much to be examined and much to be inquired into; up to that point every one was fully informed.

"That is agreeable, Monsieur the Mayor," said Pilon. "It was upon consultation of the committee who visited Monsieur Woodworth, and after they had beheld the German stranger come on his own legs to make a bargain with him, that it was decided to watch the pair and prevent the sale of the map. I, Pilon, suggested this. Had not this man Woodworth attempted to knock out my brains with an oar and pursued me even to the village? Therefore, to watch him and the German was wise. And, therefore, Pilon suggested Esper and Descarte, because they were skillful, loyal, and loved France; and they were chosen. All of one day they kept guard. It is true that Monsieur the Prisoner"—this was rather anticipating facts—"sought to bribe Esper; it is also true that the German spy endeavored to escape from Descarte, walking him about until Descarte's feet were like boiled potatoes. But now that Descarte has been murdered," he went on philosophically, "his feet do not matter. Alas, yesterday, the next day after his watch on the German, he could not walk."

This story began in the first August POPULAR. Back numbers can be obtained from any news dealer.

"I observed him on the street," the mayor interrupted.

"That is, he could not follow the German."

The mayor held up a forefinger.

"In all things we must be exact. If Descarte could not walk, we must say so; if he could not follow the stranger, it is needful to say so. But if he could go on his feet at all, that is a different matter, and must be so written. Do you observe the distinction, Pilon?"

"Yes, Monsieur the Mayor, and a very good one. Descarte could walk but not walk after the spy."

"Exactly—but, hold! Was he a spy? That is yet to be proven. Therefore, Pilon, speak of him as the stranger."

"It is true, nevertheless, he is a spy. I, Pilon, say so. That should be sufficient." And he cast a challenging look about the room. "To continue, while Esper watched Monsieur Woodworth, I looked about for the stranger, in order to——"

"Monsieur the Mayor!" a new voice interrupted.

All turned about. It was the inn woman who had spoken.

"What is it, Madame Corbeau?" the mayor inquired attentively.

"Pilon and Esper and Descarte sat in the inn yesterday from half past ten until one, and from two until seven in the evening. They drank much wine and brandy, of which the score was but partly aid. How, then, could Esper have watched Monsieur Woodworth, and Pilon have searched for the stranger?"

Having popped this question into the investigation, she proceeded with her knitting. Pilon glared at her—she, to trip up so good a customer as he!

"Madame must be mistaken," he said politely.

"There is no mistake, Monsieur the Mayor. My score book tells no lies. This was yesterday."

"Note that madame takes exception to this statement, Gaspard," the mayor advised. "Proceed, Pilon."

"At about eight o'clock Esper came from the house of Monsieur Woodworth to inform me that he and the German were to meet by the boats, whereupon the map would be exchanged for money, France betrayed. I had already observed the stranger go out of the inn at six o'clock——"

"Monsieur the Mayor!"

It was the inexorable voice of the inn woman again.

"Well, madame?"

"The German paid his account, and departed at noon."

Pilon pulled his mustache furiously. "Am I to tell the story or am I not?" he cried.

"It is perfectly proper that madame take exceptions."

Pilon glared about. "Well, one cannot be expected to speak easily when a chattering woman buzzes like a fly on a window. As I was saying, the stranger was to meet Monsieur the Prisoner at the boats. There was no time to run to the mayor, to warn the village. 'Come, my comrades,' said I, 'we will save France, we three. Her honor is our honor. Come, we are her sons.'"

A pause followed this sentiment, while he rolled his eyes about for approval. Though the tale had been told by him to the villagers many times, it was now draped in dramatic swathings. The audience hung on his words; he was satisfied, and proceeded with the tale.

"We ran into the street. The fog was yellow with the moon. 'To the boats!' said I. Thither we ran, I leading. But when we reached them no one was to be seen, and we walked all among them, looking in their hulls and among the sails and at the shadows, but, no, they had not come. 'Stand thou here, Descarte—and thou here, Esper,' said I, leading him to another spot. Then I went to a third place. He who saw them first was to whistle, but not until they had come together so we could catch them and make them prisoners and save France."

"This was what hour?" Mr. Moore asked.

"About eight, monsieur."

A third time the inn woman interrupted.

"Pilon entered the inn a little before

nine to purchase a flask of brandy," she announced.

"Eight or nine, I know not!" he exclaimed angrily. "I do not sit knitting with my eye on a clock. How should I know!"

"Continue," the mayor ordered.

"If I am allowed! We waited for a long time, so long that I went to Esper and said: 'Art thou certain they will come, little one?' Esper replied that Monsieur Woodworth had stated the hour named; only that much he knew, whereupon I went back to my station. 'It will be a long wait, possibly,' thought I, 'and Pilon may grow chilly. He had better go to the inn and purchase some brandy.' It is no doubt to that visit madame referred." He smiled, pleased with himself at this cunning explanation. "When I returned, I halted at the end of the street, just outside the boathouse to warm me with a drink of the brandy. I raised the flask to my lips. Just then I heard a whistle. The bottle dropped from my fingers. I stood a minute."

"One minute, Pilon," Mr. Moore addressed him. Then turned to Gaspard. "Did you find a broken bottle before your door this morning?"

"No, monsieur."

Pilon burst into a laugh.

"That would not be, a broken bottle. For I caught it before it struck the stone of the street."

"While you were listening?"

"Just before, monsieur. I am very quick. Still holding it in my hand, I sprang forward to the boats. At first I could see nothing. I shouted, and shouts answered me, yet they were uncertain, and the night was full of the yellow fog, so I ran to and fro, furious to be in the mêlée. All at once I heard a noise on my left, farther down where I had placed Descarte. I, Pilon, leaped toward the spot. Alas! a rope lay on the sand; it tripped me. Again I hurried forward—to behold what! That poor Descarte struggling, then monsieur stabbed him in the back, so that with a dreadful cry my comrade fell on the sand, murdered. Meanwhile, the German held a pistol to Esper's head. Then the two of them pursued us; we had but knives, while they were armed with a revolver and a club. They followed us even to the door of my house, which I succeeded barely in shutting as their feet fell on the sill."

"And the brandy?"

"Ha, that was strange! I never once let go of it, never knowing it was in my hand until I found it there when we were safe in the house."

"Remember, Pilon, it is not yet paid for," the inn woman warned him.

"*Nom de nom de nom!* are you there still?" he shouted.

"Do you know where Charles Woodworth was during the day of yesterday?" Mr. Moore questioned.

"Not of my own knowledge, monsieur. At his house, I suppose. Esper can tell you."

"You did not see him until night?"

"No."

"Why did you not alarm the village after this fight?"

"These men were at the door, monsieur, and better armed."

His answers were given promptly; it was apparent he had rehearsed them. Only in the matter of the brandy and the day's surveillance of the German and me had he been taken off guard; the first point he had later mended, the latter he ignored. And it was apparent that he had now found favor with the fisher folk in the account which he gave.

"It is infamous, infamous!" Betty whispered to me. "Can men stand up and declare such falsehoods!"

"Pilon finds no trouble in it," said I.

All the assurance in the world was his. He had now got through his invented tale, the worst was over, and he perceived that Lavouche was with him. Crossing his legs, he stared at me with unconcealed insolence; the flush brought to his face by the inspiration of his narrative still remained, darkening his swarthy skin and making his countenance more sinister. Del Hervalle had found him a willing, aye, an eager tool, who would do much for money and more for hate. What he had begun, Esper would finish. In the

minds of the fishermen I would stand convicted as a seller of maps and as a murderer. The evidence I could adduce would be but little, at best, little and unimportant, and this slow-moving but stern folk would see to it that I was arrested and Del Hervalle, who had shot Andrew, would go his way.

"Do you charge Charles Woodworth with murder of this man Descarte?" Mr. Moore asked slowly.

"I do, monsieur."

"That is sufficient, take your seat. Monsieur the Mayor, let us hear what refutation Woodworth has to make."

Again I was upon the platform.

The charge had now been made, and as I looked into the faces gazing up at me I could find no friendliness there, no sympathy, no belief in my integrity, only curiosity and distrust and grave somberness. Pilon's account had all the advantages of simplicity, brevity, plausibility, while mine involved so many romantic occurrences, so extraordinary a procession of events, that I felt that it would convict me out of hand either as a liar or, as Del Hervalle intimated, a madman. Betty's wistful look was unnerving, too. Well, I could only tell my story, then let happen what would.

Only at Stevens' face I paused. He sat, as he had all the while, straight, expressionless, but with the corners of his mouth drawn down in a hint of sardonic humor. Then his eyes met mine, and—was it in truth so?—one of the lids winked the barest wink in the world. A ray of something—hope, confidence, cheer—flashed into my heart. What it meant, I knew not; but that it indicated something he had—knowledge, information, support—I felt to my very bones.

"My father came to this island years ago," I said, in a clear voice, addressing the people. "I, on my part, played on these sands as a lad, sailed in the boats with you as a youth. In all that time did any one of you know me to do a dishonest or a dishonorable thing? Yet, knowing this, you have believed the first tale this quarreler, this brawler, this drunken braggart, Pilon, told you, a stranger himself in Lavouche, and, no doubt, with a past he dare not allow light to shine upon.

"Why, let me ask, should I sell this map? For money? I have more money now than I know what to do with; as is well known to you, my father possessed wealth, which I have inherited. The charge that I wished to sell this map to a foreigner is false, and the map I now give to Mr. Moore to return to our government, for I will beg my friend to release me from my promise to him, as I know he will gladly do.

"Of all the village of Lavouche, only two that I am aware of have believed in me, stood by me and been my friends. Others of you with whom I have broken bread have believed evil of me without ever giving me the benefit of a doubt. And now I take occasion to say that when this matter is cleared up, when the villainy is placed where it belongs and my honor is established, I shall remember who of you all have been my true friends—Jean and Gaspard—and I shall ask none but them to extend their hands to meet mine. For I shall want no others."

Indignation won the better of me. My cheeks were hot, my voice shook, I stopped. Women glanced awed at one another, while men looked thoughtful. A sudden scuffle of feet broke the silence, the figure of the owner of the donkey, Papillon, stood up.

"I—I, Monsieur Charles, believe you innocent!" Antoine shouted excitedly, extending a hand in an entreating gesture.

"You, too, then, are my friend; I shall remember. If there are others, now is the time for them to declare themselves while things look black for me," I announced grimly.

One more there was, but of that one I was not to learn until later. Perhaps there was here and there another who lacked Antoine's courage; at any rate, no second voice was lifted in my behalf in Gaspard's boathouse.

"I will proceed," said I; but the mayor raised a hand.

"You will admit, Monsieur Charles Woodworth, that there is evidence

against you which Lavouche cannot but recognize."

"Recognize, yes; but Lavouche has already condemned me. Yesterday it believed me guilty of attempting to sell the map; this morning it believed me guilty of murder, and I can read that belief upon its faces now. Lavouche has not even granted me what every man is entitled to—innocence until guilt be proven." I spoke coldly. "And, therefore, I seek friendship of Lavouche neither now nor hereafter."

He stared at the table. "Proceed," he said finally.

"How I came into possession of the map I have already related. On the voyage from Texas to New York, which I previously mentioned, I became acquainted with a gentleman who has extensive interests in Central American countries and Venezuela. I gave an account of what had occurred in the West when I obtained the map, described the French mechanic of the mines, and stated how I had last encountered him running on board a vessel bound for Venezuela, the same vessel on which, by chance, Mr. Moore and his daughter also sailed. This gentleman instantly recognized the man by my account—and with good reason. For another person with whom he had done business, a filibuster by the name of Loragan, had been shot against a wall in Venezuela by order of this former French mechanic; the latter had risen through schemes, until he became a friend of the president of that country. The French mechanic was no other than the man who is Mr. Moore's guest and who is now an envoy.

"The mechanic was named D'Urville, and murdered two men while at the mine at Forge; he now calls himself Señor Del Hervalle, and it is not known how many murders he has since committed. I was perfectly acquainted with him in his shop, fought against him. He hints that I am insane, and possessed by a hallucination; if such is the case, then the owner of the mine, the former manager and his wife, besides others who were present at the spot, will be possessed by the same form of hallucination when they see him. That the events which occurred at Forge Mine are not an invention of a disordered mind, Mr. Moore and his daughter can affirm. They have talked with the others who were engaged in the struggle, and are familiar with the circumstances. Is such not the case, Mr. Moore?"

"I have talked with the persons you mention and know the story to be true," he replied. "There was a French mechanic. The description given of his personal appearance was similar to that, I regret to say, of Señor Del Hervalle. It is a striking likeness."

Betty sprang to her feet. "I, too, have heard the story many times from my friends. It is the truth." And she sat down, with heightened color, a fighting color.

Ah, this was better than I had hoped for; Mr. Moore had gone farther than I dared think. But I was a long way off from proving that D'Urville and Señor Del Hervalle were one and the same man, as was presently evident when Melton rose and stated that he had continuously served the envoy as secretary in Venezuela for four years past—and he also added a word on hallucinations and mistaken resemblances and "doubles," and so forth.

Lavouche craned and stretched its ears. The investigation was exceeding its fondest hopes, it would be a wonder to relate unto the third and fourth generation.

Presently I went on: "When I came to the island it was with no other idea than to show the map to my army friend, evade the German, and dispose of the paper to the proper American authorities or place it in a place of security. The storm began the night of my arrival. I had not yet been to Moore House. With the abatement of the gale, I went thither in the evening, and recognized Señor Del Hervalle as an old enemy. Then Stevens and Mr. Melton leaped on my back, thinking me a burglar, and I was dragged into the house, where the señor instantly perceived who I was. Stand up, Stevens, and tell what you know."

At my word of command, for I was resolved to push the matter on my own hook, Stevens arose.

"The señor recognized Mr. Woodworth," said he. "He spoke his name the first time he laid eyes on him."

"And yet Señor Del Hervalle denies that he ever knew me," I stated. "Was he, too, laboring under a hallucination when he addressed me as Charles Woodworth if he had not met me in the Western mines? Moreover, he searched me, found the map in my pocket, at once knew it for what it was—since he had seen it often two years before at Forge—and gave it to Mr. Melton to secrete. But I tore myself from Stevens' grasp and followed him through the house and out upon the lawn, where I forced it from the secretary. Was that a hallucination when I choked you that night upon the grass, Mr. Melton?"

I waited, but he remained silent. Then once again I bade Stevens stand.

"What did the señor say when he first beheld the map?" I questioned.

"He looked at it and exclaimed: 'Ah, the map of poor Frederic.'"

"Which was the name of the man who drew it," I explained; "Frederic Douglass, D'Urville's companion in crime at Forge, the man in whose trunk the map was found, the scoundrel with whom Señor Del Hervalle connived to steal the mine's gold."

Now it was my time to feel a slim triumph, for my case so far was stronger than I thought. Del Hervalle moistened his lips, and I saw that Muriel drew away from him.

"It would seem a very, very strange thing that the señor, having never known me, having never been in America during the last five years, yet should at once know me upon this encounter, and know the map, and, finally, pronounce the name of the very man whom I declare to have been an accomplice of the French mechanic, who is identical in looks with the señor. Have you any questions to ask, Monsieur the Mayor?"

It seemed that he had not.

"Shortly thereafter he called at Stag Lodge during my absence and attempted to force the map from Andrew at the point of a pistol. Andrew would not tell where it was hidden, even when he thought death would be his reward the following minute. That Señor Del Hervalle would henceforth be a dangerous enemy I guessed; how dangerous I could not tell. Presently Margot, Jean's half-sister, sent me a warning. From whom she obtained her information possibly Mr. Melton can instruct you. Elizabeth Moore, kindly relate your meeting with Margot."

She arose swiftly. "I met her. She said to tell Mr. Woodworth, 'Beware strange doors,' and she would say no more. But only yesterday morning she sent the same warning to him, 'Beware strange doors.'"

"Let Margot speak," the mayor said.

Jean faced about. "Margot has departed from the village. Of this, also, perhaps Mr. Melton can speak."

The face of the secretary grew a trifle more yellow, otherwise he remained unchanged.

"What was the meaning of the warning?" Surçon asked.

"That will appear," I said. "There followed the visit of the committee, the posting of the guards. At ten o'clock yesterday morning Esper informed me that Jean had been injured, was asking for me. Never thinking of a trap, I hurried to the village, and came to the door of Pilon's house, where Jean was supposed to lie. Then I thought of the warning, hesitated, but I was too late, for I was shoved into the room and a blanket was flung over my head. I was then tied and carried up to the empty third story, where I was kept a prisoner. Bound as I was, I nevertheless succeeded in reaching the window. I perceived both Elizabeth Moore and Gaspard pass. It seems that Andrew and Miss Moore missed me, as I was to go to the station in Antoine's cart to meet my friend, the army officer."

"That is true!" Antoine roared. "With my little Papillon! Charles, you never came, though I had fed him an extra measure of grain."

Monsieur the Mayor rapped for silence.

"Each will speak only when called upon," he said.

"But it is true, Surçon!" Antoine replied stubbornly. "And I fed him an extra measure."

"Silence, thou!" The owner of Papillon subsided into mutterings.

The villagers were with me, if not in sympathy, at least in interest. Half a dozen called on Antoine to hush, and for me to continue.

"I was a prisoner in Pilon's house from ten in the morning until night. About seven o'clock I broke the pane of glass with my head in order to shout, but the street was empty, it still being supper time. Then Pilon and Descarte and Esper came out of the inn, and I was in fear lest they perceive the splinters of glass upon the pavement, a thing which they finally did. Presently my friend, Lieutenant Harrington, appeared coming up the street; I shouted. Pilon rushed into the house and dragged me away before the lieutenant could discover who called to him."

"Thou liest!" Pilon said fiercely.

"I speak the truth. During the afternoon, Señor Del Hervalle visited me in order to persuade me to give him the map. But it was not because of the map that I had been made a prisoner; no, but because I knew he was no other than the French mechanic, and he was determined that I should die. Pilon, Descarte, and Esper were to carry me out to sea that night, stab me, and cast my body into the waters. Pilon had his boat ready. When I had been dragged away from the window—see, here the glass cut my face—I gave up hope."

I paused in my story. Excitement in the room was intense, but it was with the tension of immovability. The fisher folk scarcely breathed; only Pilon was furiously twirling his mustache and glaring at me. Del Hervalle's eyes had narrowed to slits, though a smile rested upon his lips; old Gaspard had ceased to write, remaining with pen poised; even Jean had given over his surveillance of Esper and was gazing at me, though the tale was not new to his ears. Had I hoped to produce a dramatic effect, I could have been no more successful.

"And so it came to nine o'clock; then I escaped just as I was about to be led away to Pilon's boat. Descarte, Esper, and Del Hervalle were in the room when I leaped up and hurled the chair on which I sat. It struck the señor in the breast, knocking him over, and I fled down the stair and into the street."

"How did you escape, monsieur?" the mayor demanded, leaning across the table.

"Esper was accommodating enough to cut the rope at the last minute."

Something like a gurgle sounded in Pilon's throat. His eyes darted murder at the little man beside him. As for Esper, he gazed at the floor, while his flickering smile came and went. Surçon bade me go on.

"Descarte and Esper pursued me. I became confused, ran into the boats, and was cornered. Descarte attacking me, I knocked his knife from his hand, whereupon we grappled, and next instant I was fighting for my life. But I had had neither food nor drink during the day, in addition to being bound for ten hours—I was weak—he got his hand on my throat and almost finished me. Then my fingers touched his knife on the sand, and I used it. I am innocent of murder, for I fought for my life."

Drawing a long breath, I leaned back in my chair. My defense was made, how good or how poor it was not for me to say. The countenances of the fishermen, which had betokened varying astonishment and excitement during the recital, now resumed their stolid and inscrutable look. Moved they had been, but moved to believe was another thing, though with that peculiar prescience for which we can hardly account I felt that I had shaken Pilon's story; the evidence of Betty and Stevens, slender as it was, supplementing my story showed them that there was more here than they had dreamed of, and that Del Hervalle, despite his denial, was somehow mixed in the matter.

But merely to shake belief is not

enough; Esper would follow me, that treacherous little scoundrel who had sold his soul for money. Even at the instant he was leering at me sardonically, like a satanic gargoyle. His affirmation of Pilon's tale would swing the scale once more to the other side, and I would indeed be branded as a villain or a madman.

"There was no one saw you enter the village when you went to Pilon's house?" the mayor inquired.

"No, the street was empty."

"Note that fact, clerk." Old Gaspard, seeking in bewildered haste to remember as much of my story as possible and set it down, nodded his head. "You stated that you were captured by the German last night, and taken aboard a yacht. There seems a discrepancy, Monsieur Woodworth."

"Not at all. Andrew and Lieutenant Harrington were searching for me; they came up the beach about ten, and met me. It was when we returned together to Stag Lodge that the German sprang his surprise."

A considerable pause ensued. During the interval I again perceived the singular operation of Stevens' eyelid; this time is was a distinct, unconcealed, bold wink. What did he mean? Had he not told all he knew? I studied him, watched for a further sign, but there was none. He now sat stolid, apparently indifferent.

"Monsieur, you are excused."

I rose, glad that the ordeal was finished. It was then, as I stood ready to step off the platform, that my eyes strayed to the group filling the door. At first I perceived nothing different from what had been, for I was gazing against the light; directly, however, I noted several new heads, strange ones in Lavouche. One man grinned at me and put a finger to his lips—a wild tumult burst forth in my heart, a sense of triumph swelled my soul. For the man who had placed a finger upon his lips, cautioning silence, was the one person who knew Del Hervalle for what he was, aye, knew the villain from the top of his bald, shiny head to the tips of his patent-leather shoes.

And, with my first care-free smile that day, with a singing in my heart, I stepped down and walked to my seat.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TALE THAT ESPER TOLD.

"This is an excellent jest, this murder," Esper began, and looked down his nose, smiling.

His turn upon the witness stand had arrived. Though the investigation had now been in progress three hours, and it was nearly five o'clock, there was no abatement in the attention of the spectators. If anything, their interest was quickened as the end drew near. After the conclusion of my testimony there had been a pause, during which the great doors behind the platform were opened a little way to provide ventilation, chairs were shifted about, Gaspard's pen sharpened, and all once more made ready. It was to be the final act of the drama played within the boathouse; all felt that the climax had come, and gathered themselves to meet it. But I, I could have laughed, for I knew what lies Esper would tell, and I held in reserve still another witness.

The little fellow had mounted to the chair, smirked, laid his hat upon the board, tickled the side of his bent nose with forefinger, and began his testimony with a characteristic preface. Jean for the first time left his position by the wall; he quietly moved to the edge of the platform, where he seated himself on the planking not three feet from the witness' elbow. Esper eyed him furtively, eyed the handle of the revolver which peeped out from the young fisherman's coat at the beltline, while Jean for his part was seemingly engaged with other thoughts, and sat as ever, with arms folded, gazing straight before him.

"A most excellent jest," Esper repeated.

Surçon rapped smartly on the table. "There is no jest in it whatever," he said.

"Pardon, Monsieur the Mayor," Esper replied, twisting his head about; "is it not a jest that——"

"Begin, begin! And at the beginning!"

"Why, if one begins, how else could it be but at a beginning? I have the honor to inform every one that I was born in a stable in the town of Luneville, Department of Meurthe-et-Moselle, in France. I am thirty-eight years of age, have followed the professions of street vendor, paper seller, musician, juggler, chef, fisherman, valet de chambre, writer, gravedigger, and barber; I have lived in Lyons, Châlons, Orléans, Rochelle, Marseilles, Bordeaux, Cologne, Paris, Geneva, Venice, Genoa, Tunis, Lisbon, St. Johns, Quebec, and Lavouche; my nose was broken by a soldier who disputed with me over a woman; I can fence, speak five languages, dance beautifully, weave baskets, and compose amorous verses; I have been thrice seriously ill, once with typhus, once with cholera, once with jaundice, besides which I am troubled with baldness, and have been kissed by St. Vitus on the lips; I am——"

"Stop!" Surçon thundered.

"Yes, Monsieur the Mayor."

"We care not what you are, or what you can do; get on with your evidence."

"In good time, monsieur; permit me also to state that I am familiar with judicial procedure. I have been eight times arrested, but each time through mistake; seventeen times a witness; and forty-three times present at trials where I had an interest."

He perked over his shoulder like a clown, his long horse face turned to Surçon, his smile flickering like candlelight.

"Begin with Lavouche," the mayor ordered.

"As is agreeable to you. I came to Lavouche with Descarte, who was a drunkard, and with Pilon, who is also a drunkard and whom I made the acquaintance of in Marseilles one time when he had just been released from the galleys——"

"Galleys, thou rat!" Pilon shouted, starting to his feet. "I have not yet worn the iron—I will strangle thee!"

"Silence—silence!" the mayor cried; and Pilon fell back, fuming.

"It is true—thou hast the love marks of the little rings on thy ankles even to this day," Esper continued. "We came to Lavouche to fish. Said Pilon, 'There are those simpletons down yonder; we will find a way to empty their pockets.' That appeared an excellent jest, so we came. I, Esper, was disappointed to find this spot but a little village; to one who had lived in cities it was insignificant, hopeless, though I congratulate madame upon the fact that she keeps excellent wine. One day we became acquainted with Señor Del Hervalle, and Pilon conducted certain business matters with that gentleman. It seems that they concerned Monsieur Woodworth—but what will you? Men must live! Monsieur was to be pickled like a mackeral, though in the sea instead of in a cask. I it was who informed him, in accordance with the trap which had been set, that Jean lay hurt. That, too, was amusing."

"Thou villain!" Pilon sprang forward.

Esper leaped to his feet, whipped forth a knife.

"Villain thou! Have I borne thy kicks and cuffs and flung wine cups, swine, for nothing? Ha, you have taken money and not divided, kept monsieur's watch and not divided—come thou here and let me slit your gullet a little way. Esper is a rat, Esper is a marionette, Esper is an old boot to kick about! I have waited, thou dog! Come, I will pick your teeth with my knife point—I will tickle your fat belly. I will slice you into ribbons and little squares!" And, hissing curses, Esper stood, knife in hand, an image of hate and rage.

Next minute, Pilon had been thrust back into his seat by those nearest him; Esper's knife had vanished, his transport of fury with it, and he sat again, the same inimitable little fellow he had been before his outburst, smiling down his nose. To see him, it was to believe that nothing had happened. Presently he was commanded to proceed with his evidence.

"Monsieur Woodworth, with the blanket over his head, looked very much like an Algerian duenna. It was enter-

taining; also his vexation when he was tied in the chair in the loft was amusing—it would make me blush, Monsieur the Mayor, to repeat some of the remarks which passed monsieur's lips. I am sensitive of coarse speech, yes, having acted in the capacity of valet de chambre and being used to agreeable society. True, as madame stated, we drank much of her brandy in the inn.

"In the evening, Monsieur Woodworth and I engaged in private discussion, speculating on what it would be like to dwell under the sea where there is so much salt, likewise debating a little business transaction. Ah, monsieur has wit, and the talk was excellent between us; monsieur is also a business gentleman, and we arrived at a satisfactory agreement whereby he was to pay me five hundred dollars for cutting the rope. Monsieur is nimble; it was astonishing even to me who has seen many extraordinary things to perceive the rapidity with which he gave his compliments in the form of a chair to Señor Del Hervalle. Señor was quite prostrated by them."

I glanced at Del Hervalle. A pallor had crept into his face, but the complacent look still lingered; what his feelings were, now that his other tool was betraying him, I could only imagine. His self-control was magnificent. The villagers were whispering together, casting open looks at him, for their belief in Pilon's lie had fled before this square repudiation by Esper. And the most excellent jest of all was the manner in which little Esper, with a heart full of hate for his comrade, leading him into the trap while deceiving me at the same time in the thought that he would commit perjury, had bided his moment.

"That brute of a Descarte and I followed monsieur down the street into the boats," he continued. "There they fought. I, who had finished my business, watched the struggle. Then presently monsieur pricked Descarte in the back and Descarte ceased to be further interested or interesting. After that, monsieur and I planned a little, for there was still Pilon and the señor to deal with. Señor was an orange which had not yet been squeezed, except by Pilon—therefore, a little squeezing by Esper was very proper, was it not, Monsieur the Mayor? Yet Señor Del Hervalle is a dry orange; only a few drops came forth between my finger and thumb when he asked me to swear to Pilon's lie, only three hundred dollars, Monsieur the Mayor. That part of the jest was disappointing," he added, wrinkling his brow in regret.

Where he sat, excitable Antoine, owner of the donkey, stood up and shook one fist.

"Thou Pilon—wretch, liar! Had I but my fingers on thy throat! To seek to lie Monsieur Charles' life away!"

Confusion arose; people sprang to their feet in excitement. With a curse, Pilon leaped up, while watchful Jean ran forward, thrusting his revolver into his face.

"Sit!" he commanded.

Sulkily Pilon obeyed, and the mayor began to pound on his table, and call for order. This was slow to come; voices spoke throughout the room in agitated talk; no longer was I believed guilty, no longer a murderer. Looking over my shoulder, I observed that the strangers who had listened in the rear had pressed forward until now they stood in the aisle. There were four of them, two whom I knew, two whom I did not.

"Order!" Surçon roared. "Esper, you are excused."

The witness stepped down, glanced at Pilon, who in turn glared at him, opening and shutting his hands, then deposited his small body on the edge of the platform and against the wall across the room from his former companion and leader.

"Monsieur the Mayor, I would speak," said the inn woman. She turned to her tousle-headed boy. "Stand thou up on thy chair and repeat what thou heard while serving wine to Pilon and Descarte and Esper, or I shall rap thy ears soundly."

The boy, possibly ten years old, began to weep with fear at prospect of this undesired prominence, but climbed

up as he was bid. In a timid voice he began his account, aided by suggestions from the inn woman; gradually interest in what he was saying restored his confidence, he wiped the tears from his cheeks, licked the corners of his mouth, and concluded this part of the evidence. He had served Pilon, Descarte, and Esper with wine and brandy during yesterday, going to and fro between the barrels and their table; it was while engaged in this trudging service, an apron tied about his neck, and while he placed their glasses or wiped the board with a cloth or stood behind them awaiting fresh orders, that he caught scraps of their conversation.

As he told his disconnected tale, he pointed a stubby, dirty finger now at Pilon, now at Esper, now at me. It was in the loft of a house that I was tied; Pilon had made his boat ready, but Descarte growled in his wine cup because his feet were sore; they had also disputed about a watch which they had, which they even brought forth and displayed while they quarreled; they were in the inn most of the day, and they were going to take me out of the house at night and out upon the water. Scraps only he heard, in scraps he told their talk, in short, jerky sentences, with much time for thought between, with many promptings, with innumerable details of himself and of the cups and the table and the barrels and the wine.

"Last night he told it all to me," madame affirmed. "And I saw Monsieur Charles go by the window with Esper at ten o'clock, saw them though I was bent over the stocking which I knitted, and though it was foggy. But I see many things of which I do not speak until the proper time."

Here was another friend, and more proof that my tale was true. By every one madame was known for her knitting and her quiet tongue, which when it did vent speech uttered words for a purpose; so there was no doubt any longer in the minds of the fishermen that I was the innocent victim of a plot.

"Pilon," the mayor started to say.

By rising to his feet, Stevens, however, caused him to pause.

"With Mr. Moore's consent, I will give some information." The wink at me was now to be justified.

"Speak," Mr. Moore said.

"It's this: I was aware that Señor Del Hervalle had recognized Mr. Woodworth on their first meeting. I suspected at the time that there was something underneath the surface, but, of course, could do nothing more to find out. First, Miss Betty, who also suspected something, asked me to keep my eyes open; then Mr. Woodworth told me this morning to keep the señor under surveillance as much as possible. At a little before one o'clock the señor walked alone up and down on the lawn before Moore House, after which he suddenly entered the wood and moved rapidly toward Stag Lodge."

When Stevens made this statement I straightened, my heart beating with exultation. I glanced at Del Hervalle; he had given a start. The fox was trapped at last. Stevens continued:

"Keeping behind him and following under cover of bushes, I, too, went in that direction, not letting him out of my sight. Presently he halted in sight of the open space before the Lodge. Then he began to retreat carefully, while I did the same, keeping a gap between us. Mr. Woodworth and Andrew were in sight, walking slowly up the path in the wood, and conversing. The señor watched them a moment; suddenly he stepped into the open, fired a revolver, then turned and ran, glancing over his shoulder toward the place where the other pair halted. It was only by flinging myself down upon the ground that I escaped being seen; unfortunately he was armed, while I had no weapon, and so dare make no attempt to capture him on the spot.

"Whether any one was hit by the bullet, I did not at the time learn, as I felt it my duty to follow after the señor and see whether or not he returned to Moore House. This he did. Since the beginning of the investigation it comes out that Andrew was shot. Señor Del Hervalle did it, and I ac-

cuse him of holding the pistol and pulling the trigger." He turned belligerently around facing the envoy to see if his declaration would be disputed.

An uproar broke forth in the room. Antoine shouted to hang Pilon, to hang Del Hervalle, to hang Esper, to hang all the villains in Lavouche. Men crowded forward, turning to each other as they advanced, questioning what to do, whether or not to act; women chattered in terrified, anxious voices; children whimpered. Chairs scraped, shavings rustled, voices rang noisily throughout the shop.

"Order!" Surçon bawled.

He seized Gaspard's inkpot and beat the table violently, splashing ink everywhere. "Order—silence! Be seated! Let the señor speak!"

Ah, yes, let the señor say what he had to say; the words were caught up and repeated from person to person. That would be worth hearing, that; and, hushing one another, the people stiffened in expectant silence. Yes, indeed, now was the time for Del Hervalle, who had laid plots, woven schemes, spoken of hallucinations, to come forth and explain this thing which Stevens had declared. I leaned back in my seat—the hour had struck for Del Hervalle.

He arose quietly, and looked about.

"Many lies have been told to-day," he said, "greatest of all this last one. I am here, an envoy from another nation, on important business with your own government. I do not even answer it, I ignore the charge of assassination—it is absurd, malicious, impossible. The tale that Charles Woodworth relates is the fabrication of a disordered mind; he should be examined by medical experts for lunacy. I deny all that has been pronounced of me; this I do, though it is not necessary to make any statement, since I am a foreign official and responsible only to my own government for my conduct. Your own country will and must respect my person. Absurd all this story, when I have never been in America before, when I am uninterested in what you do, know no one——"

A voice broke in upon his statement, a figure strode up the aisle and confronted him.

"You know me, D'Urville." It was Jack Maitland who spoke, Jack, whom I had urged by letter and telegram to come to my assistance, and who, with three companions, had arrived in the midst of the investigation. "You know me, monsieur, though I've not seen you since two years ago when you helped Douglass steal gold from Forge and sought to murder me there." He pointed an accusing finger at the little Frenchman.

Del Hervalle shrank away from him, until he brushed Pilon's body. Rapidly he shot a look over the room; everywhere were inimical faces, everywhere hostile eyes. By a wonderful effort he recovered his composure, spoke a few low, rapid words to Pilon. I glanced at his secretary, Melton; the man's skin was sickly, his eyes were closed, and more than ever his face seemed carved out of ivory; his breath came with difficulty, as if it caught and hung for an instant somewhere about his heart.

"I am Señor Del Hervalle," said the envoy smoothly.

"Señor Del Hervalle you may call yourself," Maitland retorted, "but D'Urville you are, nevertheless, the same D'Urville who blackened Forge with crimes and strove together with Frederic Douglass to take my life. Now you are seeking Woodworth's because he recognizes you for what you are, and is a menace to your safety. But it won't do, D'Urville, it won't do. For here, also, is Mr. Fenton, whom you will remember. Oh, you're masquerading now in a long coat instead of a smudged mechanic's jacket; you are very adroit, very plausible, and one of the most dangerous criminals that walk the earth."

Mr. Fenton, the iron-jawed, large-boned New York financier, advanced to Maitland's side. He tugged at his gray mustache, scrutinizing the little Frenchman. "It is he, no mistake about that," he affirmed. "I'm glad to see you again, monsieur, though the pleasure was one I never expected to experience. But

now I shall see that you hang by the neck; I've come in a special train all the distance from the metropolis in your honor."

By now the villagers crowded close in a semicircle about the actors, packed like sardines. The new and final turn which the presence of the New Yorkers gave keyed them to the last notch of expectancy and excitement. From one to another of the chief personages they stared, almost unable to grasp what had so rapidly occurred.

"It is a very fine jest indeed, is it not, Monsieur the Mayor?" spoke Esper, from the witness chair upon which he had leaped to have a better view, and where now he stood tickling the end of his nose with tip of forefinger, an impudent observer.

Surçon rolled an eye at him, but being too profoundly astonished at the whole affair to make admonition, remained silent.

"I am the envoy of Venezuela," said Señor Del Hervalle, in the same smooth voice he had previously commanded, "and consequently immune from interference on your part. Mr. Moore will so inform you. I refer you to your government, and——"

"That won't go, D'Urville," Mr. Fenton answered dryly. "I burned the wires all day yesterday between New York and Washington in order to put the government in possession of the facts pertaining to you, and these two gentlemen"—he indicated the men who stood a little way behind him—"are here with authority to act. One is from the State Department, the other is a secret-service officer. Venezuela, I fear, will lose an envoy."

"Ha, Pilon, how tastes this soup?" Esper inquired gayly.

"Order!" Surçon said mechanically; "order and silence!"

"Very well, Monsieur Fenton. Will you be so accommodating as to hand me my hat?" Señor Del Hervalle requested. "Then we will proceed."

When the covering was given to him, he bowed low, politely. When he straightened up, an empty chair rose in his hand and flew straight at the ring of people before him. So silent, so sudden, so wholly astounding was the attack, that Maitland, the secret-service officer, Fenton, all of us fell back, flinging up shielding arms.

With a light bound, Del Hervalle sprang upon the platform, Pilon with him; two steps carried them across it and off at the opposite side, leaving the planks vibrating and pounding on the boats which formed their base. A shot from Jean's pistol sped after their forms, but harmlessly, since he had no time to aim. One more forward leap, and the two men vanished between the wide rear doors which stood partially open for air. Then these were slammed shut with a jarring bang.

A score of us piled pell-mell after the fleeing men, knocking over chairs and table, and scattering paper and inkpot in our wild rush. Surçon stupefied, old Gaspard dazed and still clutching his quill, ready to write, Esper standing on the witness chair—all were swept forward in our advance to seize Del Hervalle and Pilon. We flung ourselves against the doors—they shook, but did not yield; again we hurled our bodies upon the broad leaves, to no better purpose.

"They're propped shut with a beam," Gaspard squealed shrilly. "Pilon has propped them with a beam."

Hands tore out planks from the platform, swung them, with muttered curses, against the door, in the manner of a battering-ram. But the doors were stout, the prop well placed, we could not force them.

"Out of the other end!" I shouted. "They have a boat at the north point of the isle. To the boat, men! Quick!"

As one person, we turned, springing over boats and lumber. Women and children shrank together in confusion, shrieking; the room rang with noise, with the thumping of overturned chairs, chairs hurled aside, with pounding feet, shouts, the pushing of crowded bodies. A dog broke into a frenzied yelp somewhere under foot, and added to the hubbub. Suddenly the congestion opened free before me, and I almost

pitched forward on my head. Pistol in hand, I rushed to the south door.

"Follow me!" I cried.

CHAPTER XXII.

LAST OF THE TALE.

Out of the boat shop we streamed, men, women, children, dogs.

Fog filled the air. The walls of the village loomed vaguely at our backs and vanished farther up the street. Thank Heaven, it was not necessary to depend upon sight; Stevens' bit of spying had made that unnecessary. Del Hervalle and Pilon would trust their secret to save them; careful villain that he was, the former had prepared the boat for a last contingency, a final resort.

Racing northward, I crossed down to the beach and ran upon the smooth, hard sand. The tide was in, the Throat was full, the waves flowed and uncurled in sudsy foam. Rage at being thus thwarted by the Frenchman lent me speed, and gradually I perceived that the others were falling behind, all save Jean, who had caught me up, and was running even by my side, his splendid body swinging forward at each step as regularly as a perfect machine.

A hundred yards were past. Out somewhere upon the shrouded sea we could hear the low bleat of a foghorn, the warning cry of some coasting steamer moving fearfully upon its way. The fine moisture of the fog beat against our faces, the sands gave no sound save a soft crunch to our flying footsteps, and from under the cover of the mist the ocean's waves emerged to meet us, but early broke and slithered over the beach in glassy lines.

Desperately I gripped my revolver. Del Hervalle to escape now! Never, even if I should have to wade into the sea after him! Heaven would not play such a dastardly trick, would not turn loose once again upon the earth such a monster! With Andrew lying in Stag Lodge white and near death, lying on the same island with the assassin who had fired the shot, Heaven could not be so unfair, so unjust!

The line of the beach began to curve gradually eastward, while growing narrower; the sea encroached upon it and forced us nearer the brown, rugged cliffs of rock which rose above the ocean at this part of the island. Their fronts stood sheer, slashed now and again by crevasses and ravines that led up to the woods above; fragments and blocks detached and fallen down upon the sands blocked our way, among which we dodged with unslackened speed. Gulls flew up, screaming, before us, vanishing in the mists that blew and rolled in clouds across sea and earth.

"Are you sure of them here, Charles?" Jean asked.

"Stevens followed Del Hervalle. The boat was at the north point."

Once I slipped on a stone that protruded from the sand like a fang, but I was up again instantly with scarcely a second lost. As we ran, all of the events in which I had played a part raced through my mind in pictures and scenes, as if they had been cast in some kaleidoscopic fashion upon the fog: the tragedy at Forge; my months upon the ranch under the hot sun of Texas; the day upon the steamer when the coffee merchant, the journalist, Harrington, and I had discussed this same villain; my coming to the island, and my encounter with Von Hussman; my capture at Moore House; Del Hervalle's visit at the Lodge; the committee of fishermen; Esper and I bantering under the tree; the struggle in the room, and my imprisonment in the loft of Pilon's house; my killing of Descarte on the sands among the boats; my sojourn on board the yacht, with the German inspecting the map; the talks with Betty; the shot in the wood; the trial in the boathouse. They flew through my brain in tatters and rags. Was it years, or only days, in which time had poured out these things that had happened here at Lavouche?

On a sudden Jean held up a hand, stopping, as did I.

"Their voices," said he; "and this is the north point."

The shingle of sand just here was

open and free from any fallen blocks, spreading smooth and white from the foot of the cliff to the water. Hand yet lifted, Jean leaned forward to harken; it seemed at first as if we were alone with the sea; across the water stole the muffled bass mooing of the foghorn, like that of the voice of some dejected sea animal; the water lapped and gurgled and slithered and slid at our feet, while from the coast of the mainland higher up sounded the rolling beat of surf; all about us in whirling clouds, in thin vapors, or mists, swept the fog.

Then, some distance off, there sounded a voice, Pilon's, speaking.

Jean whispered: "Keep against the rock so that we shall not be seen."

Creeping along its brown flank, pistol in hand, we advanced in the direction of the speaker. Gradually a darker blot appeared in the gray fog—the boat which had been moored at low tide by a rope to a tooth of rock and which now floated upon the risen waters. Nearer we crept. We could make out its lines, its hull, its ghostly mast. It rocked and pitched upon the incoming swells like a live thing, now riding high, now sinking into a trough, while its cable slapped the waves at each conclusive jerk of its body. Pilon was at work.

Yet nearer we crept, so near we could distinguish the details of his person—his head and back, his trousers rolled to the knee, and the unsubmerged part of his bare legs. He had waded forth into the water in order to draw the craft nearer shore.

Señor Del Hervalle stood closer to us, a portfolio under his arm, which he had evidently left on dry land when he stored his other property aboard. Behind him a ravine full of bushes opened, and down this I knew led the path from Moore House and the woods to this spot. The man stood about the middle of the sand, looking shorter and fatter than ever through the illusive mist.

"Hasten, my good Pilon," he said; "we know not when they may come."

"None knew of us here," the other returned confidently, "except Melton—and what of him, señor?"

Del Hervalle turned and gazed in our direction, reflecting. Jean and I melted into the stone against which we crouched. Did he perceive us? With a pounding heart I awaited discovery. But he was fully fifty feet off; we blended with the cliff, and his vision ranged beyond. Removing his silk hat, he wiped his brow, remaining bare of head for a few seconds to allow the cooling air to play over his crown, then replaced the hat.

"Melton must take his own chance," he said. "We shall not wait."

"Good!" grunted Pilon. "I never liked that Melton."

The sail was now hauled up; the speaker stood looking up at it, then he stepped upon the prow, jumped into the knee-deep water, and began dragging the small vessel in toward the beach.

"Loose the rope, señor, all is ready," he stated.

Del Hervalle deposited at his feet the portfolio which he carried, turned, and made his way to the fragment of stone which had been utilized as a mooring post, where he began to unwrap the coils.

"Now is the time," I whispered, leaning forward to spring.

Jean's hand closed on my arm.

"No, Pilon must come nearer."

Breathlessly I waited. Each second seemed an age, an age of terrible suspense. Slowly, indolently, Pilon drew the boat toward the beach, wading through the water with swishing steps. Del Hervalle, who was now coiling the rope and moving to meet him as he worked, suddenly paused. A faint shout had sounded down the beach behind us; the villagers were coming.

"Faster, Pilon," he cried; "I hear voices."

Pilon in turn halted, cupping a hand to his ear. "There are none, señor, you heard but a gull scream."

"No, no, they come." And he began to wrap the rope hurriedly.

"Very well, señor."

Jean gripped my arm. I felt his fingers quiver. As for myself, my pulses were galloping, for the moment had come.

"Now!" Jean breathed.

Up we leaped, running. I had trusted that we should be upon them before they were aware of our presence, but this was to hope too much; Pilon, who saw us, uttered a shout of warning. Del Hervalle whirled about, dropped the rope, while his hand darted into his breast, and he uttered an oath. A revolver was whipped out by him, and with the same movement it was fired. The report cracked sharply against the cliff; the bullet sang by our heads.

I have never been a particularly expert shot; indeed, my targets have shown but few bull's-eyes. Now, however, my nerves were steeled by determination, my eye made acute with rage. Aiming at the widest part of his body, I fired, and without waiting fired again. A sort of cough came from his lips, and his weapon dropped from his fingers, while he staggered and fell.

"To me, Pilon, to me!" he cried, stretching forth a hand. "Let me not be taken!"

Pilon, however, was too busy to render assistance, for Jean, swerving when he saw that Del Hervalle was down, ran toward the sailor. The latter crouched behind the prow of his boat, which grated on the sand, and they began firing wildly at each other. With a sudden curse, Pilon flung his pistol at Jean's head, gave the boat a mighty shove, and flung himself into it.

"To me, Pilon," Del Hervalle uttered, in a last despairing cry.

I drew nearer to him, slowly, watchfully. He lay sprawling on his breast, with coat tails outspread, and looked like some misshapen beast, or a huge toad, or a great, black, round beetle. He was in pain, apparent from the convulsive working of his hands, opening, and clutching at the sand. My shots, as I afterward learned, had not been especially fine, were they judged by the standards of pistol fire, but they had been singularly effective—one through the bowels and one through the hip—and he could not in any case have lived long. His little eyes were fixed upon me with malignant hatred, as would have been those of a wounded, helpless spider; his face was ashen, which brought out with sinister distinctness the line of his black, close-trimmed, pointed beard and waxed mustaches.

"Thus ends the dream of empire, monsieur," I said, looking down upon him.

"Water!" he gasped.

"That brine?" I asked, pointing at the sea.

"What other? Be quick!"

He was in agony. I thrust my revolver into my pocket and hurried to the sea's edge.

Jean and Pilon were fighting a battle of their own. Since the latter had flung away his weapon, Jean had put away his pistol, also, trusting to bare hands. The man in the boat caught up an oar to strike my companion, but Jean seized the blade of it, and thus they tugged. Pilon's face was one of fury, a baffled animal's, with curses pouring from his mouth; that of Jean's was cold, gray, expressionless, as if cast in iron, and he had one hand on the gunwale, was wading beside the boat, was waiting an opportunity to spring in and close with his antagonist.

Shouts came from the beach. Through the fog, I could see forms running toward us. I scooped up a double handful of water and turned toward Del Hervalle. It was only to drop it with a cry, to run toward him. For while my back was turned he had wriggled forward—what the effort cost him must have been something dreadful—and was stretching a hand to the revolver which he had dropped. A spring, a kick, and I sent it spinning far away.

"Mischief will not cease in you until you are dead," I exclaimed harshly. "You think yet to sting with your last breath."

A wan smile hovered on his lips, a semblance of the old bland smile I knew so well. He struggled over upon his back, where he seemed to rest easier.

"I think it is myself I shall have to sting, my Charles," he answered.

"You had best get to your prayers. You need them sadly."

Men were running toward us, behind them were others, and behind these still more, for cries could be heard all down the beach, cries of alarm at the shots which had echoed from the cliff. The runners nearest were calling out, pointing at me.

"*Bon Dieu,* must I make a spectacle of dying for the *canaille?*" Del Hervalle gasped.

"You have earned it."

"They may look at my body, not my soul," he said, between set teeth; "only you shall have that honor."

Flipping his hand into his bosom, he plucked out a stiletto, small, bright, slender. Involuntarily a cry of horror escaped me.

"This you shall not deprive me of, at least," he said, smiling once more.

The needle point rested upon his bosom. His fingers tightened around the handle.

"Not that!" I exclaimed.

And I have often since wondered why I should so cry out. Why, indeed, not thus? Was it not fitting? If he were a villain, he had been, at any rate, bold in his villainy.

He lay upon his back. His face smiled up at me with colorless lips.

"Thus ends the dream of empire—with a needle prick," said he, in a musing voice.

Then, before my horrified eyes, the stiletto slowly sank until the handle alone was visible. The smile froze upon his lips, his eyes opened a trifle; his fingers slipped from the hilt and rested lightly upon his breast. And I heard only the booming of the surf like a requiem.

Del Hervalle—D'Urville—the man of crimes, iniquities, contrivances, schemes, plots, evil deeds, was dead!

A hand touched my elbow. I looked round; Surçon was at my shoulder; beside him other men, all staring upon the black form upon the sands. No word of explanation was needed to make clear what had occurred; they asked no questions.

A shout of exultation from the water aroused us; we turned thither to behold Pilon triumphant. He had wrenched the oar free, beaten Jean off. Out and eastward the little craft had been blown by the wind; its bow swung away from the island; but Jean still followed, intent, undaunted, relentless. Now the water washed about his waist, he waded deeper, Pilon struck at him, cursed him, mocked him, laughed aloud.

Suddenly Jean brought forth his hand and shook water from the weapon it held. Fascinated by the drama being played before our eyes, and seen through the mist indistinctly, we followed along the beach. Now Pilon uttered a cry, he dropped his oar, but it was too late to crouch under cover of the gunwale, for Jean fired. A scream burst from the sailor's lips that rang among the cliffs, a scream of anguish; and his body pitched forward and sank beneath the water. Jean turned about. Without another look, he waded shoreward, came dripping out of the sea, his work done.

Slowly we returned to the spot where the body of Del Hervalle lay. Each moment new arrivals augmented our number, until finally the whole village—men, women, and children—stood in a circle peering at it in silence. Even Mr. Moore, Mr. Fenton, and the gentleman from the State Department had caught the contagion following the pursuit. A warm hand crept into mine—Betty's. Tears of happiness shone in her eyes, for I was alive, free, unharmed. Recalling that I still carried my revolver in my grasp, I dropped it into my pocket. It had served its purpose.

The approach of night, hastened by the fog, was darkening earth.

"Am I to consider myself still under investigation, Monsieür the Mayor?" I asked.

"There is no need," Surçon replied. "The guilt of Señor Del Hervalle and Pilon was established beyond all doubt, and they have paid the penalty. Esper only remains."

"I promised him immunity," said I. "He helped me to escape, and further testified in my behalf. Where is the rascal?"

"Here, master."

He stood a little way on my right, holding my hat before him with both hands. He gazed at Del Hervalle thoughtfully.

"Thus you might have ended," said I, pointing.

"But I did not, master."

"Give me my hat."

"It is well that I fetched it, or you would have caught cold in the head—and it is Pilon, after all, who is pickled," he added, smirking. "That is amusing."

"Get away with you," said I, weary of his nonsense.

"Yes, master."

Under the directions of Surçon, certain fishermen took up the body of Del Hervalle to carry it to the village; so, with all Lavouche as a cortège, it was borne down the beach. Mr. Fenton, Maitland, and the two gentlemen with them, Mr. Moore and those of his house clustered about me in turn pressing my hand. Then I beheld the mayor lingering, uneasy, downcast.

"What is it, Monsieur the Mayor?" I asked.

"Ah, it is not as Monsieur the Mayor that I would have you address me, only as Surçon. You have said that you would have no friends but Jean and Gaspard——" He halted, unable to proceed.

"Come, is that all?" said I, stretching forth my hand.

He seized it, radiant. "We are as children here in Lavouche, we are simple," he exclaimed, "simple, as Pilon said, but honest. We do not know the great world outside and the evil men may do, such as Señor Del Hervalle sought to do against you."

"Let us forget all that has happened."

"No, we will keep it for a shame to us. But we shall love you more than ever; indeed, we have always loved you in our hearts. It was only our minds that were deceived."

"Lavouche shall always be dear to me," I answered, and he went away happy.

The rest of us walked down the eastern shore of the island, since Mr. Moore had invited the newcomers to spend the night at his home. I begged to be permitted to precede them, as I was anxious to reach Stag Lodge and learn of Andrew's condition. Thereupon Mr. Fenton informed me that he had picked up the surgeon for whom I had wired, taking him, at the solicitation of the division superintendent, aboard his own train, which he was glad to do when he learned that it was at my urgent demand the physician was coming to the island.

"And he has been attending your servant these two hours past," he concluded.

"I must go to Andrew at once, notwithstanding," I answered. "He saved my life, and my heart is heavy for him."

"Go, by all means," Mr. Moore said. "You can return to Moore House later, as Mr. Fenton states that the surgeon brought with him a trained nurse. You will have to eat as well as the rest of us; all of you shall be fed at my table."

"Very well," said I; and hurried forward.

Then Betty flew to my side. "I'll go with you, for I also love Andrew,"

It was not until we were out of sight of the others, past Moore wharf and come almost to Stag Lodge that I clasped Betty in my arms. So much had been gone through, so much suffered, so many dangers escaped, that love and happiness welled in my breast. Her dear eyes looked into mine with trust and joy; her arms clung to me. Nothing should ever divide us, I and the sweetest, truest, most loyal heart in the world.

"The ocean is wide, but not as wide as our love," said I. "It beats and throbs and flows forever, yet not so greatly as our love; it has tides, but our heart will have none; there are fogs and storms and night—our love will not know them. It plumbs the waters, it runs to meet the dawn, it ascends and it sits in heaven. My soul gives itself to you, dearest."

A while after as we went I perceived Esper following afar off. Had he seen? He walked with a finger laid upon his nose. Well, I cared not—

all the world might know my love for this dear girl at my side whose hand clasped mine.

In the lodge I found the surgeon and Billy sitting before the fireplace, the one grave and the other glum. But at my appearance the latter sprang up, ran to me, and wrung my hand.

"All is well, all is well?" he demanded.

"All's well with me," I responded. "The investigation is over; I'm proven innocent, Pilon and Del Hervalle were shown to be guilty, and now they're both dead."

"Dead!" His eyes opened wide.

"Yes. Jean killed the one—I the other."

"Of course, I had to miss the fun," he sighed.

I laid a hand upon his shoulder. "But you've done me a greater service here than you could have performed there. Your part was true friendship."

"You know, of course, I would not have wished to do anything else than I did."

"And Andrew?"

"Doing finely. The ball is out, he is sleeping. The old fellow has a constitution like an ox—simple life, early hours, and all that, you know."

Now indeed was I happy. To know that he would recover, be my old faithful Andrew again, caused my cup of joy to run over. I would have a peep at him! So, tiptoeing into the bedroom, Betty with me, I beheld him fast asleep. His silver hair had been smoothed, his eyes were closed, he breathed softly and regularly. The nurse smiled, raised a finger, and we went out as noiselessly as we had entered. Dear old Andrew!

"I am Monsieur Woodworth's new valet de chambre," I heard a familiar voice remark.

Esper stood before the fireplace, very much at home.

"By Heaven, you need a bath, then," the surgeon stated, with a puff at his pipe.

"That is very true. Circumstances of late have caused me to suffer inconveniences, Monsieur the Doctor, among them a lack of washing—I will presently shine with soap and water."

Suddenly a thought struck me.

"What became of Melton?" I asked him.

"He vanished into the sand when every one ran after you; he ran to a boat, pushed it off, and rowed across to the mainland. I, who had stopped to secure your hat, caught him by the elbow. 'Monsieur, it is impolite to go without making a farewell,' I said. But he was in haste, it appeared. 'Out of the way!' he answered, and swore at me. So I sent a little stone after him to give him more haste, which struck him on the leg, and accomplished its purpose, master."

I turned to Betty.

"This Esper is to be my valet," I said, grinning. "I purchased my escape from Pilon's house on that condition."

"This fellow!"

Esper bowed, smiling.

"I am a good valet, mademoiselle—also I am very discreet."

Now, did he refer to what he had seen on the beach, I wondered?

"This poor Andrew," he went on, "I will cure him. I have been something of a doctor, among other things. I am acquainted with herbs, poultices, and cupping." At which the surgeon sniffed.

"Come, we will all to Moore House for supper," said I.

The surgeon knocked the coal out of his pipe and rose. Billy went for their hats. As we passed from the house to the beach, I looked back at its lamplit windows, a hundred emotions rising in my breast.

A shadow spoke at my elbow.

"A most excellent jest is finished, master."

And so it was—a jest of fate, an entanglement that had taken three men from earth in the jesting.

THE END.

The Specter at Serpent's Cut

By Frank L. Packard

Author of "The Blood of Kings," "Spitzer," Etc.

The "spook doctor" drops into Big Cloud and adds one more topic for the expatiation of the talkative railroad man, Matthew Agamemnon. He is still a talker, but the occult is taboo. There's a reason

SUMMED up short, the Hill Division is a vicious piece of track; also, it is a classic in its profound contempt for the stereotyped equations and formulas of engineering. And it is that way for the very simple reason that it could not be any other way. The mountains objected, and objected strenuously, to the process of manhandling. They were there first, the mountains, that was all, and their surrender was a bitter matter.

So, from Big Cloud, the divisional point, at the eastern fringe of the Rockies, to where the foothills of the Sierras on the western side merge with the more open, rolling country, the right of way performs gyrations that would not shame an acrobatic star. It sweeps through the rifts in the range like a freed bird from the open door of its cage, clings to cañon edges where a hissing stream bubbles and boils eighteen hundred feet below, burrows its way into the heart of things in long tunnels and short ones, circles a projecting spur in a dizzy whirl, and shoots from the higher to the lower levels in grades whose percentages the passenger department does not deem it policy to specify in its advertising literature, but before which the men in the cabs and the cabooses shut their teeth and try hard to remember the prayers they learned at their mothers' knees.

Some parts of it are worse than others naturally; but no part of it, to the last inch of its mileage, is pretty—leaving out the scenery, which is *grand.* And what with cuts and fills and borings and trestles and bridges, in an effort to unsnarl a few knots in the tangle, the company has been tinkering with it pretty well ever since the last spike was sent home and the small army of consulting scientists, with a flourish of trumpets, bowed gracefully to the managing director of the Transcontinental —and withdrew to seek other worlds to conquer. However——

This is Terhune's story; and it goes back to the time when "Royal" Carleton was superintendent and Tommy Regan, big-hearted as he was gruff, was master mechanic. Terhune was an engineer. His full name was Matthew Agamemnon Terhune—the only excuse for which seems to have been that his parents were possessed of a sense of euphony, or one of them, maybe, a first-grammar education in Greek.

Anyway, Terhune was dutifully appreciative—he signed in full.

Clarihue, the turner, swore at him at first for usurping more than the allotted space ruled off on the grease-smeared pages of the book in the roundhouse that recorded the goings and comings of the engine crews; but eventually he became wise enough to content himself with a snort of disgust amplified by a spurt of black-strap juice pitward. Terhune, given an opportunity, would argue that, or any other matter under the sun, with a calm and dispassionate flow of words that had Tennyson's brook for continuity beaten seven ways for Sunday.

"Matthew *Aggie-mem-gong* Terhune!" choked Clarihue. "The fathead wind bag!"

Regan put it a little differently.

"Talk!" said the master mechanic. "Talk! The man's a debating society, that's what he is. He'll talk when he's dead. I don't know what kind of springs he's got on his tongue. I wish I did. I'd equip the motive power department with them. What?"

The division, however, being generally in a hurry, called him plain "Matt."

With the exception of Clarihue, perhaps, no one ever got mad at Terhune. If it is true that obesity is a sign of good nature, Terhune is simply a case in point. He exuded it from every pore of his fat, dumpy body; and he dispensed it alike on the just and on the unjust.

Certainly, the man was more or less of a consummate ass; but any inclination to kick him on that score vanished with one glance at his great babyish moon face, with its two little, round blue eyes that stared out from under a straggling collection of sandy hairs, which fringed, much after the fashion of a monk's tonsure, an otherwise bald and shiny head. After that glance it was all off. There was no getting mad at Matt.

Professionally, Terhune was all right as far as he went. Nothing startling, nothing out of the way—not even a regular run. Regan used him as a sort of ever-ready substitute for anything that might turn up. And, as far as Matthew Agamemnon Terhune was concerned, it appeared to be all one to him. Switching, yard work, local freight, double heading, anything—he took it as it came, complacently, good-naturedly. So that it did not bar him from talking, he was happy.

He could talk in a cab; and there, perforce, he had an audience. The fireman had his choice between being the target for Matt's views and theories on an astounding range of subjects—or jumping! From the Alaskan Boundary Question to the Fresh Air Movement Matt was posted—and, if not profoundly posted, his ideas, at least, had the merit of being original.

Now all of the above is, on the face of it, extraneous to the fact that, during a winter of pretty heavy running, the Serpent's Cut had netted an appalling number of disasters, even for that bedeviled piece of construction that never under any circumstances was known to behave itself for better than a month at a stretch; but, extraneous as it may appear, it had, for all that, a very direct bearing on Matthew Agamemnon and his propensity for argument and talk.

However, in any event, the driven-to-desperation directors down East, when they got the cold figures that totaled up the claims and represented the amount of rolling stock reposing on the scrap heap from six months' running in the Serpent's Cut, voted, though they bit their lips when they did it, some sweeping and extensive alterations on that particular stretch of track. And when the plans came out in the spring, they called for a new bridge across the Muskrat River at the foot of the grade, and a rock cut from the mouth of Number One Tunnel to straighten the bridge approach.

It was a big piece of work—about the biggest the company had ever undertaken; everybody realized that. So, once the improvements were decided upon, they went at it with a rush; and the lower slopes and stretches of the mountains were just beginning to shed their winter coats, when a brigade of engineers, bridgemen, foremen, Polacks, Swedes, Russians, and what not, moved into construction camp on the banks of the Muskrat.

Then the bridge material and the thousand and one other odds and ends of supplies began to pour into the Big Cloud yards—it was all out from the East then—and there followed, in the natural order of things, a daily-work special to the camp. Regan gave it to Terhune, of course; and gave him, besides, the various engines as they came out of the shops to break in after their overhauling. Also he gave him as fireman young Charlie Spence, brother, by the way, of the chief dispatcher.

Take it all around, it was an incongruous-looking outfit that Matt pulled

out of the yards those days. Generally a big ten-wheeler, spick and span, glistening in fresh paint, with Terhune obliterating the cab window and bouncing up and down on his seat like a cheerful rubber ball; and little Spence, who had never run anything but "spare" before, expanding his chest in the gangway fit to bust the buttons off his undershirt; while trailing behind, slewing, rattling, bumping, came a hybrid conglomeration of gondolas, reversible gravel dumps, flats groaning under blocked and shored-up steel bridge girders; maybe a box car here and there, by way of picturesqueness; and, to wind things up, on the tail end, a caboose that was out of the ark, and not much bigger than a baby carriage. That was Work Special 117 west, 118 east.

So, west to the Muskrat in the morning, lugging back the empties at night, became, for the time being, Terhune's run—and it suited him as no job had ever suited him before. Except for the trip to the water tank and turntable at Beaver Tail, two miles west of the camp, he had the day pretty much to himself; and there were new men on the work, men he did not know. Or, perhaps, to put the matter in a truer perspective, men who did not know Matthew Agamemnon Terhune—for the engineer corps, like the material, came out from the East.

Matt buttonholed Ferguson, the chief, on the first morning, and opened on him with the Newfoundland Fisheries Dispute.

Ferguson, who was a receptive Scot, lifted his scraggy eyebrows and rose to the bait—Terhune's introduction invariably carried a glimmer of sense; but, being busy at the moment, he invited Terhune to dinner to hear the rest of it; where incidentally he introduced his staff, which consisted of a couple of seasoned assistants and another couple of embryonic engineers, whose names, plus a small edition of the alphabet recently forged on by a fond and trusting Alma Mater, were Podger and Clark.

It wasn't an expensive invitation from the viewpoint of the exchequer of the engineers' mess—Terhune was too busy to eat—and for about a week Matt had a standing invitation; but after that, whether some one tipped the Scotchman off, or the combined galaxy of mathematical talent got the answer for themselves, Terhune's midday repast consisted of what he fished out of his own dinner pail.

Terhune might have been a little puzzled at this change of front; but certainly he was not abashed. Nothing, so far, in all of Matthew Agamemnon Terhune's forty-three years of life had ever abashed him. Furthermore, if the construction engineers' mess renounced him as an organization, certain units of it did not; for, while the canny Scotchman and his two assistants politely and unostentatiously avoided Matthew, the guileless and demure Podger and Clark continued to hang, and to all appearances to hang breathlessly, upon the words that fell from the engineer's lips.

Things went on this way for some two weeks; and then suddenly, coincident with the advent to Big Cloud of one Señorita Vera Cabello, the Alaskan Boundary Question, the Fresh Air Movement, the Newfoundland Fisheries Dispute, and all other subjects of character, scope, and vital import similar, were blown away, as fluff is blown before a gale of wind, in the face of a new and weightier matter for research and discussion. That is, it was new, and therefore weightier, to Terhune.

Regan, with ungracious bluntness, called her a "spook doctor"—but the master mechanic was always blunt. Miss Cabello—pardon, Señorita Vera Cabello, in her advertisements in the Big Cloud *Weekly World's Era,* announced herself as a "seeress renowned on two hemispheres," and followed with a modest compilation of her qualifications and attainments.

She was the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter—of course. Under the great teacher Yagagama, she had studied the mystic laws of crystal gazing in the far Orient. At her command were, not one, but *two* familiars of the dread other world, with whom she was in constant communion for the benefit of those who consulted her; and further,

by special arrangement and appointment—for which there was an extra fee—she would, for a brief space, recall the ethereal forms of any dear departed on request—always provided that the "rapport," whatever that meant, was propitious and favorable, a risk to which the client subscribed in his accompanied-by-the-fee application for the séance.

The Señorita Cabello was clever—whatever else might be said of her, let that be understood. She gave a free public performance in the fire hall on the night of her arrival. Terhune attended this—and was impressed. There was a black cabinet on the stage and black hangings and misty, white shapes moving about, potent tributes to the señorita's powers. Terhune bulked large in a front chair, his moon face puckered, his little, round eyes like pin points, as he stared into the Egyptian blackness in front of him.

For a wonder he didn't say much that night; but the next night he presented himself at the señorita's apartments, which she had meanwhile opened over Dinkelman's clothing emporium on Main Street.

There wasn't any silly business about it as far as the engineer was concerned; that is, there wasn't any glamour of feminine charms exerting any undue influence upon him—the señorita was neither comely nor in the flower of her youth. Brought down to a simple equation, the idea of the occult and its mysteries caught Matthew Agamemnon hard; and the latter part of the señorita's advertisement caught him harder.

Terhune had never forgiven his twin brother Sime for the inopportune and fatal attack of heart failure, some five years previous, with which the defunct had so arbitrarily terminated, at its most crucial moment, the argument upon which they had been engaged at the time. He most earnestly desired to converse with Sime.

The señorita agreed. It took her a few seconds to get the line clear and warm up to her work; but, inside of three minutes by the watch, she was writhing around on the floor like a serpent stung by bees, choking and squealing and foaming at the mouth.

Terhune had seen a cat in a fit once; and there was one thing about him that was common to every engineer on the Hill Division—which was to act promptly in an emergency. There was a pitcher of water on the table. Terhune seized it, and heaved the contents violently into her face.

The stiffening limbs relaxed with amazing mobility, and the Señorita Vera Cabello sat up with surprising suddenness. What she said is not recorded, because Terhune didn't quite get the rights of it himself; but when he left, he carried with him a sort of hazy realization that he had only himself to blame for sidetracking the "rapport" with Sime—and just at the psychological instant when it was about to be consummated, too.

Therefore, he tried it again the following evening. This time he sternly refrained from even a thought of the water pitcher—which incidentally had been removed—but Sime, perhaps because he had got close enough to witness the proceedings of the night before, seemed a little diffident about taking a chance on getting mixed up with the turmoil and strife of things terrestrial. Sime did not appear; but Matthew was still optimistic.

How much of the engineer's last pay check, in a very brief interval of time, became the property of Señorita Vera Cabello is a personal matter, and Terhune's own business. Terhune never said. If Sime was stubborn, so was Matthew Agamemnon. Being twins, it was natural; but let that go.

And the señorita was clever. Pending connections with Sime, she fascinated Matthew by initiating him into the first degree of the mysteries of the Beyond—and hinted at much more. She spoke in a far-away voice of dwellers within the first and second and third spheres, wise counselors and mentors to mankind; of apparitions, wraiths, and specters, who appeared to mortals when something of dire moment was impending. But—the world was blind and gross and crass—few, very few, could

see or understand. It was necessary to be attuned, to be sensitive.

"Zar are many t'ings in heaven an' earth——" she quoted; and sold Matthew Agamemnon a little literature on the subject.

At first, Terhune, like a man feeling his way on a new run, and wary of getting his signals mixed, confined his reflections on this now all-engrossing matter to young Spence, his fireman.

Spence listened incredulously.

"I dunno what you mean," said he, "'bout visitations from the other world an' appuritshuns an' wreaths an' that sort; but if it's ghosts you're drivin' at, I don't take no stock in 'em. Never saw one; did you?"

This was the challenge direct. Terhune blinked his little eyes fast, and proceeded to get his hand, or, rather, his tongue, in on Spence—and scored cleanly. Spence, on the evening run back that night, took to dodging, between shovelfuls, the shadows of the telegraph poles as they flitted across the gangway; and, as Work Special 118 pulled into the Big Cloud yards, he confessed to a "creepy, crickly feelin' up an' down his spine."

With this victory as a credential of proficiency, Terhune opened fire the following day on the construction camp. And on that day, and for some ensuing ones, he bombarded it pitilessly. He caught Ferguson on the narrow ledge of an excavation where the chief couldn't get away. He cornered the assistants more than once. He labored patiently with excitable Russians, staring Swedes, and half-witted Polacks, whose knowledge of English was summed up in the few choice and polite phrases with which they were accustomed to be addressed by their lords and masters, the road bosses and foremen. He talked to everybody; and no man, except perhaps Sime, who was dead, could pace Matthew Agamemnon on talk.

But of all his audience, Podger and Clark alone were solicitious and sympathetic. At the start, like Spence, they asked him if he had ever seen a ghost himself. Matthew regretted that he had not; but, in lieu of personal testimony, offered an imposing array of authentic statistics, which he now had at his fingers' ends, of people who had.

Clark was unquestionably impressed. So was Podger. But their conversion was a lower and more stubborn matter than Spence's. They yielded a point here and there from time to time, as men whose convictions are reluctantly overridden; but it was several days before they made a full and unconditional surrender.

However, if it took longer than it did with Spence, once converted, having been trained in a mathematical school of hard fact, their conversion was not the passive conversion of the fireman. Instead, it was practical, and—but the red is against us, and we'll have to slow up till we get the track.

To-day, now that Ferguson has built his bridge and gouged his cut through the mountain walls, you can see the mouth of Number One Tunnel staring at you like a little black eye up the grade all the way from the bridge; but you couldn't then, for the right of way swept out of the tunnel into a long half-mile curve close up against the bare gray rock of the mountainside following the river bend; and, still curving at the bottom, where it crossed the Muskrat, hit the old wooden trestle on the tangent.

This didn't leave much room for a siding anywhere; but, what with Terhune and his dump carts and the work in general, a siding there had to be from the first, so they tapped the main line as far up as they could squeeze in, paralleled it down to the trestle, and left the last two rails bent up and sticking out over the water, with the river for a bumper.

About the only rights Terhune and his Work Special had were this same Muskrat siding and the three-mile stretch from there to Blazer, the first station east of the camp; the latter because, once Matt had pulled out, he was in the clear, with nothing on earth to reach him till the operator at Blazer could wave a tissue in his face.

So, also, because there was quiet in the Serpent's Cut and a lull in the traffic

for an hour or so around six o'clock, Terhune was scheduled to leave the Muskrat at six-fifteen each night and run to Blazer for orders. After that, if he wasn't laid out more than two or three times by the wayside, he would eventually make the Big Cloud yards by eight or eight-thirty—in time to keep a one-sided appointment with his tantalizingly elusive relation, and imbibe mystic lore from the señorita, after her customary earnest, if unproductive, fit was at an end.

Matthew Agamemnon Terhune had become a busy man, take it all round; for the more he listened to the señorita on subjects touching the dread familiars across the Styx, the firmer became his belief and the stronger grew his desire to enlighten the unenlightened—so the harder he talked.

And possibly there is a moral here. Certainly no one ever had a less fertile soil for the sowing of seed than was the field wherein Matthew Agamemnon labored; and yet, to-day, the first canon in the creed of the Hill Division, bar no man among them, not even the pick-swinging Russians and Swedes and Polacks, is ghosts.

It simply goes to show what sincerity and unbounded perseverance will do; for, on the Friday night when Terhune pulled out from the Muskrat siding, a week after Señorita Vera Cabello's arrival at Big Cloud, the only disciples he had were young Spence, his fireman, and those two learned bachelors of science, Clark and Podger.

In the first flush of spring the days are still short, and it had already shut down pretty black when Terhune, on the dot of six-fifteen, moved up the siding and cautiously negotiated the main-line switch for the bumping, groaning, rattling string that trailed behind him.

You can come down the stretch from the tunnel to the trestle at a fairly stiff clip, for the arc of the curve is wide; but going up is quite another matter, with a trifle better than a four-per-cent grade to climb. Terhune had a heavier load than usual that night; and his pace was little faster than a man's walk as he crawled up for the tunnel's mouth, his engine entering her protest in long, hoarse, growling barks from her exhaust, and coughing a hemorrhage of sparks and red-hot cinders from her stack.

There wasn't much of the right of way in sight, for the beam of the electric headlight, with the curve of the track, just cut the left-hand rail a few yards ahead, and then shot away like a truant child to play among the trees and foliage of the Muskrat Valley that was opening up below. The effect of this might have been pretty, but it did not appeal to Terhune—he had seen it before; and, besides, he had other things on his mind. So, by the time they were well up to the tunnel, having got snugly and comfortably settled on his seat, he cast, after a professional glance at his gauges, an introspective eye across the cab at Spence.

"There's none so blind," said he, with originality, "as them as won't see. There's hundreds and hundreds of cases with evidence enough to back 'em up that no one with any sense could turn down. Now take that drummer ghost somewheres over in Scotland that always plays his drum as a warning when one of the family's going to die. No one disputes that, do they? Well, then, how about that?"

"I think they're horrid things," said young Spence uncomfortably.

"I don't say they're not," admitted Terhune, wagging his head sapiently. "I don't say they're not, but—— *What's that!*" The words burst from his lips in a dull, frozen gasp of terror, followed on the instant by a wild, incoherent yell from the fireman.

With a lurch as it struck the straight, and the roar of the deep-toned exhaust swelling into a thousand thunders that reverberated hollow and cavernous from the vaulted roof, the big ten-wheeled mogul had shoved her nose into the round, inky black mouth of the tunnel; and the headlight, wavering back to its duty, was throwing its beam far into the opening. And there, where the shaft of light focused ahead upon the rails, was a sight that made Terhune's blood run cold.

Full in the right of way, facing the train, one hand upheld, as though in warning, the light shimmering through his ghostly body onto the rail beyond, stood the white, shadowy specter figure of a man.

Great clammy beads of perspiration sprang to Terhune's forehead, his fat, florid cheeks paled to ivory, and the fringe of hair around his head seemed to rise up until it stood out straight and stiff; then, working like a madman, he jammed in the throttle, applied the "air," shot the reversing lever over the full segment into the last notch, whipped the throttle wide open again, released the "air," and, for all the world like huge pinwheels, the sparks flying from the tires, the drivers began to race backward.

No train before or since on the Hill Division ever came to as abrupt a stop as did Work Special 118 east on that night. The jerk threw Spence halfway up the coal on the tender; and Terhune spit blood from loosened teeth for a week afterward. With any initial speed, the flats and the gravel dumps and the box cars would have telescoped themselves to splinters. As it was, they came together with a rattle and bang and crunch and grind of battered buffers that would have put a park of artillery in the toy pistol class.

Then the mogul began to bite into the rails, and the train began to back out of the tunnel and down the grade; but, ahead of it, leading the way, the coupler shivered like a bit of pastry from the terrific snap-the-whip wrench it had received, sailed the ancient caboose. And swaying, writhing, squeaking, squealing, followed the rest of the Work Special, with Terhune, all flabby fat now, hanging from the cab window, his whistle, from pure nervousness, going like a chattering magpie, and his teeth, after one last sight of the apparition as they swung clear of the tunnel, going like a pair of castanets.

The train crew in the caboose, by the time they got their scattered senses together from the shock that had bowled them like ninepins over the stove and left them wrestling with the stovepipe, found themselves halfway back to the trestle, with the speed of their crazy conveyance increasing at every foot. They let out a concerted yell, and jumped.

Down below, at the din infernal, lights were flashing all around the camp. Some one rushed to the switch, and threw it for the siding. The caboose, for all its age, took it like a young colt, whisked the length of it, shot off the upcanted end rails, and, describing a neat parabola in the air, plumped, in a clean dive, into the bosom of the Muskrat. And it was only the fierce swing and jolt of the engine as it took the switch, and the wild yell of the man beside it as he swung the main line open again, that momentarily restored Terhune's wits sufficiently to check the train and save the rest of his outfit from the same fate.

As he came to a stop, men clustered around him; but for the first time in his life Matthew Agamemnon's tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and he was dumb. He could only hang weakly in the gangway as the volley of questions came at him thick and fast.

Then suddenly, from the tunnel's mouth, came the long, shrill siren scream of a 1600 class mountain racer, then the pur of steel, the dull rumble of beating trucks growing louder and louder; and, bursting like a cannon's tongue flame from the curve, the glare of a headlight shot streaming into the night. A roar, a whirl, a row of lights flashing like diamonds from a solid string of brass-vestibuled Pullmans swept by, took the trestle with a tattoo that echoed far up and down the valley, and was gone. And behind her, the questions silenced, men with blanched, awed faces saw Matthew Agamemnon Terhune, with a hysterical sob, collapse limply on the floor of his cab.

Just a series of illogical, disconnected happenings? Perhaps. It depends on the way you look at it. Queer things happen in life. If it had not been for the mechanical bent that enabled Podger and Clark to tinker so effectually with bits of wire and gauze sheeting, and Matthew Agamemnon's propensity for

talk that inspired them to do so, and the advent of Señorita Vera Cabello, who inspired Matthew Agamemnon, the be-Pullmaned Convention Special with clear rights to Glacier Junction, twenty miles west of the Muskrat, which would, none the less, have hit Blazer on the tick of her schedule, with no reason on earth for holding her up, since she had time and to spare to get past the siding before Terhune pulled out, and which would just as surely have had a breakdown a mile west of Blazer, delaying her fifteen minutes, a delay that, in the face of her rights through, her crew were concerned only in making up, would—but what's the use!

Chance, or luck, or something more than that, if you'd rather, whatever you like to call it; that was all that stood between three hundred conventionites, to say nothing of two train and engine crews, and a shambles quick and absolute, that night.

However, that as it may be, it was a week before Matthew Agamemnon climbed into a cab again; and in the meantime, at the polite solicitation of the town marshal incident to a few unpaid bills, the señorita had departed from Big Cloud. This, from the standpoint of the psychologist, was a misfortune. His visits perforce ended. There was no telling whether the Specter of Serpent's Cut, as they came to call it, had enhanced or shattered Terhune's belief in her and, concretely, in the occult. Not that Matthew Agamemnon was silenced; far from it. He talked harder than ever, as far as that goes, only he talked *exclusively* on such subjects as the Alaskan Boundary Question, the Fresh Air Movement, and the Newfoundland Fisheries Dispute.

THE SCIENCE OF THE FLAPJACK

NOW twist your wrist
And bow your back,
And learn to turn
The good flapjack.
Give it a flip
When rich and brown,
Catch it kerslap!
When it comes down.

Give it a coat
Of sorghum thick,
Or bacon grease
Will do the trick;
Or even plain—
Not near half bad,
If a day's tramp
Or hunt you've had.

Flapjack, you helped
The trail to clear
Through all the wilds
Of the frontier.
Well your humble
Part you played,
For by your strength
The West was made.

ROBERT V. CARR.

Smoke Up!

By Victor Lauriston

"A good cigar is a smoke." But a bad one! Well, it's sometimes a smoke too, as the Gauzo people discover when they find their trade falling off in competition with the Maidenhair

"AND you wish to leave?" questioned old Jones, president of the cigar company, mopping his bald head with a handkerchief.

"I do," returned McInery curtly.

"And why?"

"I must consider the future," said the sales manager calmly; but his teeth bit into his cigar.

Old Jones grimly eyed the broad red band.

"The Gauzo people, eh?" he demanded, with a touch of harshness.

McInery nodded.

"And what do they offer you?" questioned the president.

"In common fairness, I shouldn't tell you, if I hadn't decided to accept—which I have. They offer me five thousand more than I get here, and give me a five-year contract. All they ask is that I run the sales up to a level with what ours are now—and keep them there for the five years. I don't want to stay anywhere if I can't do that with a cigar like what they're putting out—a cigar that practically sells itself."

"Oh?" snapped the president caustically.

"If you don't believe me, try one," flashed McInery, proffering his cigar case.

Old Jones leisurely selected a red-banded Gauzo. As he puffed in thoughtful silence, a puzzled expression crossed his face.

"It's not at all bad," he muttered reluctantly. "In fact," he admitted, "I don't see how they can produce a cigar like that for the money."

"They furnish quality goods, you see. They back that by heavy advertising. They want a salesman who'll fit in. I'm the man for the job. That extra five thousand's just as good to me as to any one."

Old Jones wrinkled his brow thoughtfully. "I can't blame you, Mac, but I'm sorry to see you go." He withdrew the cigar, and, turning it over and over in his fingers, queerly eyed the broad red label.

McInery fancied he saw a vagrant tear gathering in the old man's eye. He felt touched. All his years in the business had been spent with the Maidenhair Company, under old Jones. The remorseful thought forced itself upon him that it was the very training and connection Jones had helped him to secure, that was making him so valuable to the rival company. But the old man's next words, sharply businesslike, quenched the last spark of hesitation.

"I can't do any better for you." Jones stared at the cigar; then gazed fiercely at McInery. "Our business has gone back twenty per cent. since these Gauzo people started. They're cutting into our field, and you haven't kept them out. Old Maidenhair's a good cigar—as good as she ever was—but Maidenhair can't pay for service that isn't given. You get my drift, Mac? That's why I'm letting you go. Every traveler brings in the same story. It's 'Gauzo, Gauzo, Gauzo, we can't compete with Gauzo. Every dealer's pushing Gauzo. Every smoker's buying Gauzo.' Well—you can leave at the end of the month. I'll see if a new deal won't give me a better hand."

His tone was savagely bitter, and he turned abruptly to his desk.

McInery stared at him a moment irresolutely. "Good afternoon," he muttered harshly. But he did not withdraw.

Old Jones glanced sharply up from his papers.

"I've one more word, Mac," he declared. "Maidenhair can't pay for service that isn't given; but give the service, and Maidenhair will do her part. Smash this Gauzo boom by the end of the month, and I'll go them one thousand dollars better. If you don't smash the boom, you can go—go to the devil, if you like! Here—take these with you. Smoke them. Good afternoon."

He thrust a box of cigars into McInery's outstretched hands. The box was open, and the cigars wore flaring red bands. The sales manager backed out of the president's den without a word. In his own private office he sat a long time, staring at the cigars.

Old Jones' words had come like a thunderclap. He knew that the sales had fallen off. Gauzo, however, was calculated to cut right into the Maidenhair trade. A new ten-cent cigar, well advertised, always did that. Dealers were given a good price, and pushed it; smokers were interested, and tried it. In the end, Maidenhair had always come back to the old place, for none of the rival productions had staying qualities. But as for Gauzo—he himself had tried Gauzo, and Gauzo was different. The Gauzo people were hustlers. They were putting out a wonderful ten-cent cigar. They were offering him the salary he wanted. And now sentiment, the strongest tie that had bound him to Jones and Maidenhair, was snapped by the old man's almost brutal words.

"It's a go," he muttered.

Suddenly he remembered Chalmers' letter. He turned it over thoughtfully; then inserted his paper cutter in the envelope. In the midst of the operation he paused, and, taking one of the red-banded cigars from the box, reflectively lit it. Then he laid it aside and took up the letter. The message was brief. McInery stared at it in amazement.

DEAR MAC: Do you remember Harry Gollan? CHALMERS.

Gollan! The name seemed familiar. But what had an enigmatic question like this to do with his invitation to Chalmers to become his right-hand man on the new Gauzo sales staff? McInery, trying to piece together fragments of recollection, puffed mechanically. And then, leaping suddenly to his feet, he hurled the cigar from him with a violence that shattered it to fragments on the rug, the concussion forming a constellation of sparks in a cloud of flying ash.

"Rotten!" he ejaculated.

He remembered Gollan now. Gollan had been the assistant sales manager for Maidenhair when he, himself, was a traveler on the Southern run. The Moritoro cigar people had made Gollan an offer for four years, cast-iron contract, with a big salary. And——

Trembling nervously, he lit a second cigar from the box. Then he laid it on the desk and tried a Gauzo from his own cigar case—one that the president of the rival company had given him. He compared the bands, the color, the general appearance. The two cigars were outwardly identical. But the sample cigar was superb; while the cigar from the box was utterly vile.

"So that's the game," he muttered tensely. "A big advertising splurge, a good cigar to sample, a price that gets all the dealers pushing for all they're worth—and then, a dummy cigar, that's dear at ten for a quarter, to make money on. And I—I'm to be paid five thousand extra salary if I keep the business up to a certain figure. If I accomplish that miracle with a rotten cigar, the Gauzo people will make a fortune—and if I don't, they aren't compelled to keep me."

His teeth snapped sharply together. Then, sinking into his chair, he gloomily viewed the situation. Into this trap he had walked deliberately. There was no alternative now but to accept the Gauzo proposition—unless he were able to smash their boom utterly, as old Jones had bidden him.

"By Jove!" he cried; "I'll try it."

A broadcast advertising exposé of the whole fraud—that was his first idea.

He rejected it summarily. The Gauzo people would, he mused, simply put out a good cigar for a while, and laugh at him.

He paused in his angry meditation long enough to clear the pile of work from his desk; then, dismissing the stenographer, he sat alone, mentally wrestling with the hard problem, till the creeping in of the shadows reminded him that the afternoon was nearly gone. Rising, he donned his raincoat.

"Let's see," he mused, "what's doing?" He quickly checked off the items in his diary. "There's the annual banquet of the State Commercial Travelers' Federation. Have to go, I suppose," and his usual cheerful tone lapsed into an unnatural growl, as he pulled down the roll top of his desk.

Halfway to the elevator, a sudden idea struck him. He abruptly turned back to the main office.

"Jim," he cried, to the nearest clerk.

"Yes, Mr. McInery. What can I do for you?"

"I want twenty boxes of cigars."

Leaning forward, he whispered. The clerk gave an exclamation of astonishment.

"Remember, they must be fresh—the very latest shipment. Attend to it right away. Tell the printer to hustle, if it kills him. I've business ahead of me, and must hurry. Charge the expense to my personal account. Good afternoon."

Reaching the street, he hailed a taxicab, and for the next two hours, regardless of supper, went speeding about the city.

Early the next morning McInery intruded himself into old Jones' sanctum.

"I'm going down to Cincinnati to take in the Ohio Travelers' Convention banquet to-night," he remarked. "After that, I'll be on the road two weeks. I'm leaving McGinnis full instructions concerning my work here."

Old Jones glared at him.

"Trying to get in touch, eh, for the benefit of Gauzo?" he sputtered.

McInery grinned.

"You have guessed it," he retorted defiantly.

The president's only response was a grunt of disgust.

At Buffalo, two weeks later, McInery filed a telegraph message for the president of the Maidenhair Cigar Company.

Kindly reserve to-night for Commercial Fraternity luncheon. Imperative.

McINERY.

The sales manager had counted on reaching the city in mid-afternoon. The luncheon would commence at seven o'clock. Old Jones, however, usually left the office at five; and McInery, despite the urgings contained in his last long letter to Jim, doubted the clerk's ability to persuade the president to wait for him. The train was an hour late, and lost time steadily. During the last half hour of the trip, watch in hand, he saw the margin of time still left him grow steadily narrower. He had hoped for time to visit his rooms, and spruce up a trifle. This hope he reluctantly abandoned. The taxicab which he took at the station landed him at the Maidenhair offices within a few minutes of six.

The general offices were deserted, save for Jim, who, still busy over his books, nodded as the sales manager entered. In the president's distant den, however, an incandescent light still glowed. The light reminded McInery that just at this time of the month their men came in from the road. He had expected to get in ahead of them; but evidently some one had forestalled him.

It was Watkins, the crack Western man; McInery recognized the voice. The door stood slightly ajar, and through the narrow slit the sales manager glimpsed old Jones, nodding excitedly.

"And Gauzo?" It was the president who spoke.

"Say," chuckled the drummer, "I had a mighty funny experience with Gauzo. Dropped into Blair's pharmacy, at Wichita. Young Blair turned me down flat. I hung about in the dispensary a while, for I figured a talk about the corn crop would loosen him up a bit. While I was there in came Bartlett—you know Bartlett, of the Bartlett-

Fraser Edge Tools? He wanted a cigar. Blair pushed the box of Gauzos across the counter."

McInery heard the drummer's hoarse chuckle, and fancied the impatient glare in old Jones' eye.

"Well?" queried the president.

"Bartlett cussed a blue streak. 'Throw 'em into the garbage can,' he yelled. 'Gimme something worth smoking. Gimme a Maidenhair.' Oh, I was just killing myself in the dispensary. And, say—what's hit the drummers? If I ran into that once, I ran into it a dozen times. On the home trip the dealers weren't pushing Gauzo any more—said every traveler was down on it, and the whole public had caught the contagion."

McInery, coughing loudly, stamped into the den. Old Jones glanced up.

"Going to that luncheon?" he demanded.

"Yes," returned McInery shortly. "We haven't any time to lose. How do, Watkins?"

He chatted with the Western man, while the president hurriedly donned hat and coat.

As they took their places at the long table in the grillroom, McInery noticed a big splotch of red beside his napkin. Involuntarily he fingered it.

"Great advertisers, eh?" chuckled the man to his right. "I guess Gauzo's hitting your people pretty hard." He chuckled again. "So Jones is getting into the game?" he added, picking up a neat little card with the words, "Compliments of Maidenhair," printed in modest brown.

McInery glanced at old Jones. Jones, his face purple, was savagely fingering the big Gauzo cigar with its flaring red band and the Gauzo card with its flaming letters:

WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE
GAUZO CIGAR COMPANY,
MAKERS OF GAUZO,
THE GREATEST TEN-CENT SMOKE
ON EARTH.

Jones sat in manifest agony of mind. McInery noticed that he did not eat, or even attempt to eat. When, after the water biscuits and the ice cream had come and gone, the chairs were pushed back, the sales manager saw half a dozen hands reaching forth for the red-banded cigars. He glanced pityingly at Jones. The old man sat mute and white, his lips quivering. Maidenhair was his life work.

McInery turned his gaze away. A few moments later, in the midst of the chairman's remarks, he heard a soft thud, scarcely discernible. Simultaneously old Jones nudged him.

"Look!" he whispered hoarsely.

The bumptious man to his right, whose tobacco smoke had a moment before set them both coughing, had ceased smoking. The red-banded cigar was gone. Old Jones pointed triumphantly at the floor beneath the man's chair. McInery saw a shadowy black object encircled by a flare of dull red. The man, after a moment's hesitation, reached forth his hand and fumbled beneath his crumpled napkin. His fingers came in contact with a large, red-lettered card. He unostentatiously tore it into shreds. Then, more calmly, he lit the modestly brown-labeled Maidenhair.

"Come away," whispered McInery.

"I saw a score of them thrown away," muttered old Jones, in the lobby. "Isn't it lucky that you happened to send the Maidenhair? Those fellows will never forget the contrast, and——"

Halting abruptly, he stared at McInery.

"Say," he rasped suddenly, "was it really the Gauzo people who sent those red cigars?"

"By proxy," McInery answered. "I have been giving them some advertising. Every traveler who has banqueted in the last two weeks east of the Mississippi has been helping me—involuntarily. What's more, I'm asking for that six thousand raise you offered me. The Gauzo people can paddle their own leaky dugout."

He proffered his cigar case.

"You needn't take one of those burning brush piles with the red bands," he added jocularly. "As the drummers are saying from end to end of our republic: 'Gimme something worth smoking—gimme a Maidenhair.'"

Buttermilk Bailey

By Edward Lucas White

Author of "The Skewbald Panther," Etc.

Is there any merit in buttermilk? Lots of people are drinking it for their health. Of course the subject interests you. Here's a funny story of a man who got away with thirty-one thousand one hundred and eighty-eight glasses!

"WHO'S the meanest man in Naso?" one boy would pipe, in a relishing treble.

"Hank Root!" the shrill chorus would crashingly reply.

Then the urchin with the deepest voice would complete the jest by a drawling cry of:

"All 'cep'n' Zenas Bailey."

The choiring jeers pursued the fat man as his speckled white horse jogged up the long hill. They were spattered after him from around corners at a discreet distance as he hitched his team to the gnawed rail under the elms along the side of Clough's Hotel. They followed him as he waddled down the sidewalk of Main Street to the harness maker's shop. When he halted in front of it the yells redoubled. You would have said that every boy in Naso had come up to recruit the mocking groups.

One knot of boys peered round the corner of the hardware store opposite Clough's Hotel. From the gateway of the stable yard, a hundred feet down Main Street, on the other side of the harness shop, protruded a score of towheads. Each of the alleys on either side of the Franklin House, opposite the harness shop, sheltered a half dozen barefoot lads, ready for instant flight, but coming as near as they dared. Consecutively, in rotation, each group took up the sneering cries. Sometimes the delivery varied. The first cry might be:

"Who's the meanest man in Iroquois County?"

Then the group basso would drawl:

"Hank Root," leaving the mob to shrill their scorn in a chorused:

"All 'cep'n' Zenas Bailey."

The fat man did not turn his head. He was used to it. This was the reception accorded him whenever he drove into Naso of a fair day, when the boys had nothing else to occupy them. If he minded it he did not show it. No more did the man at work inside the shop. Its front windows bore the sign, in big, sprawling letters:

HENRY ROOT,
HARNESS MAKER.

To the left of the shop a flight of steps led up to the second story. Its doorway had four small signs nailed up beside it, one over the other. Each ended with the same three words:

ATTORNEY AT LAW.

Bailey, ignoring the jeers, stood regarding the signs. As he stood he stroked his long, horse-tail beard. The beard was whitish, and stained below the mouth with tobacco juice. Except his chin, his face was shaved, showing a stubble two days old. His eyes were a pale, fishy blue; so close were they set that it seemed impossible for a nose to accommodate itself in the narrow space between them. A nose there was, but one so narrow and high that it seemed the thin edge of a wedge driven from behind through his bullet head and pudgy face. It was hard to believe that so thin a nose could belong to so rotund a face, to so corpulent a man. His mouth was a mere horizontal slit across his face. His straw hat was more like a basket turned upside down. His suit of clothes was a pepper-and-salt gray,

turning yellowish with exposure to rain and sun. His wrinkled boots had never known blacking.

He studied the four signs as if he had never seen them before, ruminating deliberately. Then he slowly mounted the stairs.

The harness maker came out and shook his fist at the groups of boys. They scuttled off. Baiting Hank Root was too dangerous to be kept up long.

At the head of the stairs a narrow passageway ran across the building. It was lighted from each end by a small window. So dirty were the panes that the passage was rather dim. Bailey inspected the four closed doors. Each had a ground-glass pane filling the upper part of it. Each pane had painted on it in small black letters words identical with those on one of the four signs at the doorway. One of the four read:

THADDEUS BOWDOIN,
ATTORNEY AT LAW.

In New England they pronounce Bowdoin "Bowd'n"; in Iroquois County, New York, they pronounce it "B'dine, to rhyme with "fine," or "wine."

Bailey opened Bowdoin's door without knocking. Such is the custom of that part of the world.

The lawyer was seated in a chair of the barroom pattern. He leaned far back, tilting the chair on two legs. He had his booted feet on his desk. His blue trousers were pulled up nearly to the tops of his boots. His coat and vest matched the trousers. His shirt, cuffs, and collar were rumpled and soiled, his little black string cravat, frayed, as were his collar and cuffs, was ill-tied and awry. His hat was tilted on the back of his head; it was a soft, wide-brimmed, black felt. The hair under it was blacker than the hat, glossy, very straight, and rather long. His beard was black as his hair, but crinkly; it flowed to his waist with the softness of a beard which had never been shaved or trimmed. His eyes, which sparkled as he glanced up, were as black as his beard or hair, and looked out of a very pale face.

"Hello, Zenas," he said.

"Hello, Thad," the farmer replied, and seated himself in one of the two other chairs—plain wooden chairs of the kitchen pattern.

The lawyer searched his pockets, produced a plug of tobacco, and offered it to his visitor, saying hospitably:

"Have a chaw, Zenas?"

Bailey cut off as much as he could possibly get into his mouth, and returned the plug. His host bit off a moderate quid. For some time they chewed in silence, expectorating liberally into the ample spittoon.

Bailey began to talk slowly, and with many pauses. The lawyer conversed sociably, and watched the fat man, ruminating, as everybody did, how so plump a creature could be so niggardly.

After every other subject was exhausted, Bailey said:

"Thad, I calc'late I need your help in a leetle matter o' law."

Bowdoin looked interested.

"I guess I've got a matter of a suit on hand," continued Bailey.

"Who are you going to sue now, Zenas?" the lawyer inquired.

"Nary sue," Bailey disclaimed. "I'm goin' to be sued, I reckon."

"Who's suing you?" Bowdoin asked.

"That pesky ward o' mine," the farmer declared disgustedly.

"Alonzo Peck?" the lawyer ventured.

"The same," said Bailey, with the air of a man making a notable point.

"I reckon you'll have to try Bill Hazleton this time, Zenas," Bowdoin told him.

"Whut fur?" the farmer inquired in dismay.

"I'm on t'other side, Zenas," Bowdoin stated mildly, almost regretfully. "Alonzo's been here no more than a half hour ago. I'm engaged against you."

"Thunderation!" Bailey exclaimed. "I'm plumb sorry. I sensed ye'd be some cheaper'n Bill Hazleton."

"Perhaps I might be, Zenas," his host agreed reflectively, "and perhaps I

mightn't. However, you'll have to try Bill or somebody else."

"Thunderation!" the fat man remarked again.

He disengaged himself from his chair, and went out

Some days later, Bowdoin was in his office, conferring with a lanky young man, who sat awkwardly in his chair, his knees wide apart, his elbows on them, his straw hat held low in both hands between his knees, and constantly twirled as he talked or listened. His hair was dry and tow-colored, his eyes a bleached green gray, his forehead and chin receding, his bent, crooked nose the most prominent feature in his pasty face. Uneven, yellow teeth crowded his mouth, and projected against his seldom-closed lips.

"I've been over all the papers, Alonzo," said the lawyer, "and you have a good case, a passably good case. As a matter of justice, you should win it. As a matter of law, I'm not so clear. Zenas has been mean to you. He's mean to everybody. He's been that onery mean to you that he has nigh overreached himself. But I wouldn't like to say I'm sure he's overreached himself. You can't dispute one single item in all that bill.

"No, Alonzo, let me talk now; you listen. You can't dispute the facts as to one single item in all that bill of charges. You can dispute the fairness of the charges in a great many items. Some charges are too high. Some are items that should never have been charged for at all. On the face of that absurd, penny-splitting, cheeseparing bill, that ridiculous, mile-long bill, you would win against anybody with any jury anywhere, and Zenas is not exactly popular in Iroquois County, New York. Any jury Bill Hazleton can get together in Naso is sure to despise Zenas Bailey. So far everything is in your favor.

"But that is not everything. The jury will despise Zenas, but they will be fair-minded men. Zenas has been mean about his charges, but he has been fair, more than fair, about the management of your property. He can't help being mean. But, apparently, he can't help being honest according to his idea of honesty, and it is not a bad idea of honesty. It will strike almost any jury as a generous idea of honesty. That's the queer thing about men like Zenas. He just couldn't help charging you for all those contemptible, little, trifling items. Contrariwise, he just couldn't help turning over to you every penny he thought was due you from your inheritance, and he just couldn't help making the very most of your inheritance to you.

"Your father left you a matter of three thousand dollars, pretty decently invested in bank stock, railroad bonds, mortgages, and such like; small investments, but fairly good, interest small, and dividends small, but fairly sure.

"Zenas hands over to you a property worth all of ten thousand dollars and a few odd hundreds. Some of the investments are the same as your father left, but they are not the same identical securities he left. The whole thing has been turned over and turned over to advantage, turned over not once, but many times. The investments are better, the dividends are bigger, the interest is higher. And they all are the safest and surest possible investments. Zenas has done wonders for you all along the line.

"Then he has thought it proper to hand you a complete report of all his changes in the investment of your property, of all the buying and selling, with complete details as to dates, amounts, commissions, profits, interest, dividends, and what not. This was entirely uncalled for, and the fact of his keeping the record, and handing a copy over to you shows that his conscience is perfectly clear. He thinks his conduct toward you unimpeachably correct in every particular.

"His sincerity will tell with a jury, the more so as his record is against him in one way. He has speculated with your money over and over. If he had lost for you, you could make him smart. But he has always won. And you get

all the proceeds. He has taken nothing but his administrator's commission. He hands in this fool bill of charges, running over sixteen years, and footing up to nine hundred and eighty-seven dollars and sixty-five cents, as if he had made up his mind to run the figures that way, and doctored the items to make them come out. He can't help that; that's the miser in him. Yet he gives you the entire proceeds of your property under his management.

"Now, what any man can't help thinking, what the jury is sure to think, is that there was nothing to hinder him from keeping still about his juggling with your investments, handing you your three thousand dollars in securities similar to those your father left it in, pocketing the difference, and handing in no bill at all. He would have been six thousand and odd dollars better off. That is what an unscrupulous and clear-sighted rascal would have done. Zenas is all-fired mean. But he's no rascal. He's too honest to be unscrupulous, and too close to be clear-sighted. He has satisfied his honesty about your property, but he could not help giving in to his meanness about all those extra charges.

"Now, Alonzo, I've said my say. I'll push your case, and I'll try to win it for you. But as like as not the jury will say:

"'He might have kept the seven thousand dollars. He didn't. What's a bill for less than a thousand over against that?'"

"Thad," said young Peck, "Zenas had no right to one cent of the money he kept from me to even that bill. I'm going to make him pay it all back—every cent of it."

"If the jury bears you out in your claim," the lawyer admonished him. "If they decide for you."

"They ain't a-goin' to decide agin' me," Peck asserted. "Look at them items! He got three dollars a week for my board and lodgin'. He paid for my clothes out o' my money as he went along. All that's square. I hain't got a word to say about the money he took out as he went along. But this here bill of extra charges is piracy. I didn't owe him nothin' but that three dollars a week.

"Look at the items in it anywhere:

"April 15th, 1879. Broken window, forty cents.

"That was the time the ol' Shanghai rooster was on the kitchen table gobblin' Ma Bailey's cup custards she'd set out to cool, an' I chucked a stone at him, an' he flew up and broke a pane outen the kitchen window, an' ol' Bailey swore the stone broke the window.

"November 27th, 1884. Broken hame strap, twenty cents.

"That was Thanksgiving mornin', an' he had me helpin' him hitchin' up, an' a rotten ol' hame strap broke off in my hand. You could tell how ol' an' rotten thet hame strap was, when it broke off in the hand of a fourteen-year-ol' boy."

"Yes, I know, Alonzo," the lawyer interrupted him. "Those items are no more absurd than all the others. We could tear him up if it warn't for the offset of the profits he's made for you on your property."

"Profit or no profit," said Peck, "them items are robbery. Twenty-five cents for driving me to meetin'! What jury is goin' to back up such stealin' as thet? An' the buttermilk! I believe I could stan' it all 'cep'n' the buttermilk."

"I've been thinking about that buttermilk," the lawyer said, stroking his beard. "We might win out on the whole bill on that buttermilk, if it is put just right to the jury. I see points in your story about that buttermilk. But there's one more question I want to ask you, Alonzo. I've been considering, and I don't really believe you've brought this suit of your own accord. It ain't like you. What I want to know is: Who spunked you up to suing Bailey, anyhow?"

"It wuz Weezy," the youth replied, twisting his hat.

"Weezy" is the vernacular diminutive of "Louisa" in that part of the world.

"Weezy Budd?" the lawyer inquired.

"Yes," Alonzo admitted. "She says she ain't a-goin' to marry annybody

that'd lay down under no sich dealin' as Bailey's."

"She is right, my boy," the lawyer told him. "And you'll get a good wife if you get Weezy. I'll drive down and talk to her. I calculate she can help us if she will."

Miss Louisa Budd was a tall, rather bony, and decidedly red-faced girl. She was not good-looking, but she wore an air of determination and of knowing her own mind. She received the lawyer in the little front porch of her father's house, he having declined to walk into the stuffy, dark parlor, with its smell of moldy straw under the carpet, and its gloomy, uncomfortable, hair-cloth-covered furniture.

She called her visitor "Thad." In Iroquois County, New York, in 1891, practically the entire native population of both sexes and all ages addressed each other, and spoke of each other, by their first names, generally abbreviated.

"Yes," she said, "I'll be in court, sure, Thad. 'Lonzo and me is to be married along about corn-huskin'. Nine hundred an' eighty odd dollars'll make considerable of a difference to me an' 'Lonzo. He'd ought to get it all back. I'll be there, sure."

The lawyer then unfolded to her his scheme, and her part in it.

She demurred vigorously.

"Thad B'dine," she said, "I wun't use no sich words. I'd call it profanity an' blasphemin' to speak sich words, let alone in court before all them men."

The lawyer modified his instructions to suit her views.

"Yes," she said, "I'll say that, an' I'll say it so's nobody'll miss hearin' it. You can bet I'll be that mad I wun't lose my voice, let alone me bein' too skeered to do it. You needn't have no worriment about my failin' or backin' out."

The Naso courthouse was of the Grecian temple pattern in vogue in the days of Clay and Webster. It was a rectangular brick structure, with a portico of four wooden columns, painted white, which supported a timber pediment of the same color. It stood upon a little hill, with a modest park of trees and turf about it, at the corner of Main and Franklin Streets, opposite Clough's Hotel.

The first fall court day saw Alonzo Peck and Louisa Budd on a front bench among the spectators in the courtroom. As the case of Peck versus Bailey was certain not to be called that first day nor the second, William Hazleton, attorney at law, observed them with some surprise. But they kept quiet and silent, side by side, looking on, and listening so unobtrusively that before that first day was over he became used to their presence, and ceased to notice them or where they sat, precisely as Thaddeus Bowdoin, attorney at law, intended.

Louisa, who had an excellent appetite, and who was a good provider, carried a large covered lunch basket. From this, she and Alonzo, sitting on the grass under the trees during the court recess, partook liberally of various good things. Louisa carried that lunch basket carefully, as if she loved it. She moved evenly and softly at all times, but particularly in the courtroom.

On the morning of the fourth day the case came up. Bailey sat in the same place which he had occupied the day before. Louisa Budd, tenderly carrying her big lunch basket, noiselessly took her seat behind him. On the other side of the courtroom, Alonzo sat with his counsel.

When Thaddeus Bowdoin, attorney at law, rose to address the jury, he began his speech in a tone of mild fairness, from which was carefully banished any hint of animosity or venom. The plaintiff's side of the case, he said, admitted the sincerity and good faith of the defendant in respect to each and every one of the items in the disputed bill of extra charges. But a man might be so biased by hereditary instincts that, while sincerely thinking himself just and righteous, and supposing himself acting with impartiality and even-mindedness, he might yet be unable to resist his tendency to favor himself as over against any other human being whatever. The plaintiff's side of the case

contended that the defendant, whether consciously or unconsciously, whether intentionally or unintentionally, had so favored himself and unduly favored himself in each and every item of the disputed bill of extra charges.

At this point he began to warm up to his subject, and display more animus and animation.

"We are far from admitting, gentlemen of the jury," he said, "that these various items should have been charged for at all. But, supposing that we were to admit the justice of collecting charges from a ward's estate for such items as these, we maintain, without fear of contradiction, that the charge in each and every case is absurdly and indefensibly high. That position we believe no argument can impugn, to shake it no evidence can be adduced.

"But we base our proof of the injustice of this bill of extra charges on firmer ground than upon the gross and absurd exaggeration of the amounts of the several items; we contend that not one single one of these items should have been charged against the plaintiff at all.

"You have heard the evidence as to many of these items, have heard the admissions of the defendant. But the full significance of these admissions may not have sunk into your minds. I ask your indulgence while I review with you some of the items as to which you have heard the evidence, while I cite other similar items as to which, if the counsel for the defendant disputes our contentions, we can readily adduce evidence even more conclusive.

"Let me take an item at random from the earlier pages of this account:

"April 6th, 1878, two eggs, four cents.

"Now, what are the facts as to this charge? A boy of the tender age of eight years was sent to the barn by the wife of his guardian to hunt for eggs. On his way back to the house with his prizes he stumbled and fell. Two of the eggs were broken. It has been admitted by the defendant that he never sold eggs on his farm, or even at Naso, for two cents apiece in the month of April. Yet he charges his ward two cents for each of those eggs, as if the eggs had been truly worth that much!

"Nay, more, the charge was made as if the eggs had been appropriated by the plaintiff, or as if they had been abolished and annihilated by the accident. Yet you have heard the evidence of the plaintiff, corroborated by the defendant's wife, who admits that the contents of the eggshells was not wholly lost, that the broken eggs were saved wholly or in part, and used by her thereafter in her home cooking. Such items as this, gentlemen of the jury, I might characterize by a word as harsh as it is well deserved.

"A frequently recurring item in this account is: '*Ride to meeting, twenty-five cents.*' You have heard the evidence, gentlemen of the jury; all the witnesses uniformly testified that it is not the custom in Iroquois County to charge members of one's family, dependent minors, wards, hired help, or even boarders for the driving of them to church on Sunday, not even if a team were hitched up specially on the boarders' account, when no one else meant to go to meeting on that Sunday. Yet the defendant was in the habit of charging his ward, from the time he was a child of five years of age, a quarter of a dollar each Sabbath for driving him to meeting!

"There is no pretense made that in all that time a team ever was hitched up exclusively for the use of the plaintiff. There was always some one else going to meeting, whether the plaintiff went or not. As a rule, the entire household went to meeting. Yet the plaintiff is debited with a charge of twenty-five cents for nearly every Sabbath in the sixteen years he lived under the defendant's roof, even for many Sabbaths when the probability is that no one went to meeting from that farm at all. I say the probability, gentlemen of the jury, for we cannot prove the charge was made for any one specific Sabbath when the family of the defendant did not attend meeting."

At this point the counsel of the defendant objected, the objection was sustained, and so much of the words of

the counsel for the plaintiff as were objected to were withdrawn. Bowdoin began again with renewed vigor:

"I ask you, gentlemen of the jury, whether it is probable that the plaintiff, from the age of five years to the age of twenty-one years, missed, in respect to attendance at meeting, no more than eighteen Sabbaths in sixteen years? Yet this is what is implied in this bill. During the time which the plaintiff spent under the defendant's roof there occurred eight hundred and twenty-one Sabbaths. I have been over the account, and find the item *'Ride to meeting'* charged for eight hundred and three times, bringing up the total charges of the defendant for conveying his charge to and from meeting to the unconscionable total of two hundred dollars and twenty-five cents.

"Confident, gentlemen of the jury, that you will not only find this charge absurdly high, but will think it proper that no charge whatever should have been made for any such transportation, I leave the matter to your good sense and mature consideration.

"Gentlemen of the jury, I might treat each and every item of this lengthy account in a similar manner. I will not weary you with such an unnecessary burden upon your time and patience. I ask your attention for one more item. It falls in August, 1884, when the plaintiff was a trifle over fourteen years old. The item reads:

"One suit of clothes, nine dollars and ninety-eight cents.

"Permit me to recapitulate what you have heard from the witnesses. In spite of your intelligent attentiveness, its full effect may not have reached you.

"The facts are these: The defendant had purchased a new suit of clothes, of a good quality of black diagonal cloth, clothing suitable for Sabbath wear for a prosperous church member. He had obtained this suit at a bargain sale in Rochester for the amazingly low figure of nine dollars and ninety-eight cents.

"Make use of your imaginations, gentlemen of the jury. Behold him, on a Sabbath morning in August, habited in his garments of pride, in his newly acquired, his cheaply won garb of glory. Behold him about to climb into his Sunday-go-to-meeting democrat, soothed by the consciousness, that whereas he will drop but a nickel into the plate at meeting, the drive there and back will net him a quarter, since his ward goes with the family in the family conveyance. Behold him pause and ask his boyish ward:

" 'Lonzo, wut's the matter with them dawgs?'

"Remember, gentlemen of the jury, his ward was a boy of fourteen. The boy answers him:

" 'I guess there must be sumpin' caught in the steel trap I set in that there hen coop the dawgs is a-barkin' aroun'.'

" 'Hevn't ye looked?' the defendant asks.

" 'Yes, I've looked,' the boy answers. 'But I ain't rightly sure 'bout killin' a mink or what not on the Sabbath. I judged I'd leave him till ter-morrow. He ain't goin' to git outen thet there steel trap.'

"To which the defendant replies:

" 'I ain't goin' to leave no trapped varmint over a day an' night near my hen roost. You boys ain't got no sense.'

"Behold him approach the coop, a small, gable-shaped box of rough boards, suitable for retaining a hen, while permitting her chicks to run in and out through one or two holes. Behold him whistling to his excited dogs. Behold him invert the box. Imagine to yourselves, gentlemen of the jury, the panic and wrath of the trapped animal, surrounded by open-mouthed curs, threatened by a determined man with a large club. That trapped animal had lain without moving a muscle, while the dogs which it could not see barked and sniffed round its hiding place. Now in an instant exposed to its enemies, and seeing them close, it was certain to do all in its power in self-defense. And its power was not small.

"No mink lay held by the leg under that coop, but a full-grown specimen of a black-and-white animal, of a creature known to science as Mephitis Chinga, or

Mephitis Americana, a creature whose common name I hesitate to pronounce in the presence of ladies, some of whom I see here present.

"Conceive, gentlemen of the jury, of the stench, of the consternation of the onlooking family, dressed in their best clothes, and perched in their democrat, ready for the drive to meeting.

"Conceive of the frantic convulsions of the defendant, of the spectacle he must have made fleeing from the spot."

When order had been restored in the courtroom, when he could be heard, the counsel for the defendant objected. The objection was sustained, and the obnoxious expressions withdrawn.

"To come down to the facts, gentlemen of the jury," Bowdoin went on, "the defendant charged the entire cost of his ruined suit of clothing upon the plaintiff, taking the ground that its destruction was due to a plot laid by the plaintiff for the defendant's discomfiture. I leave you to decide, gentlemen of the jury, whether this charge can be sustained by any contentions drawn from law or equity."

When Bowdoin finished his speech, and sat down, his client leaned over to him and whispered, in a disappointed tone:

"Thad, ye never said 'buttermilk' wunst."

"Alonzo," the lawyer replied, stroking his beard, "are you running this case, or am I?"

Hazleton handled his side well. He made the most of the points Bowdoin had foreseen he would dwell upon. Manifestly he made a good impression on the jury. The counsel for the plaintiff stood up to close.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he said, "carried away in respect to my emotions by my sense of the outrageous injustice inflicted upon my client; dazed, as it were, by the enormity of the defendant's behavior, and by the incredibly penurious niggardliness of his character; bewildered by the astounding variety of what I might say, of what I felt called upon to say, of what I must needs say; drawn two ways by my consciousness that your time, on the one hand, is valuable, that eternity, on the other, would be too short to consider the multitudinous items of this endless bill of charges; I must ask your pardon if I omitted to mention the most striking, the most insufferable, the most frequently recurring charge in the entire indefensible exhibit.

"I find in this bill of charges fifty-seven hundred and forty-one separate entries debiting the plaintiff with from one to twenty-two cents for buttermilk. Not one single day—spring, summer, fall, or winter—in nearly sixteen years fails to appear in this amazing series of entries. The buttermilk is charged for at one cent for each glass, and the total of the charges under these items foots up to the staggering total of three hundred and eleven dollars and eighty-eight cents, implying that in less than sixteen years the defendant consumed thirty-one thousand, one hundred and eighty-eight glasses of buttermilk.

"Gentlemen of the jury, we might justly dispute the reliability of these entries. We might allege, with every reason to suppose we should be agreed with, that no sane man could be expected to believe that any human being of any age throughout five thousand seven hundred and forty-one consecutive days could drink buttermilk daily for every day of the entire series without missing one day. However, we waive consideration of that contention.

"We might raise the point of the improbability of a child of five years of age laboring under a passion for buttermilk amounting to a vice, craving it so insensately that not a day could go by but that he must guzzle his adored tipple. We waive that point also. Personally we do not for a moment believe it, but as far as this case goes we admit that the plaintiff did consume about five glasses of buttermilk for each and every day of five thousand seven hundred and forty-one consecutive days. We allow the defendant's claim so far.

"But we ask you to recall the facts as witnessed to by the plaintiff, the defendant, by the defendant's wife, and by others besides. It has been proved

here in this court, gentlemen of the jury, that when the plaintiff was at the tender, impressionable, and docile age of five, the defendant, his guardian, a guardian loved, respected, and feared, repeatedly told him not to drink water, but to drink buttermilk; that water was unhealthy, while buttermilk was healthy. It has been proved that this pressure upon youthful susceptibilities was maintained day after day, week after week, month after month, season after season, and year after year.

"We ask you to consider whether, in view of this insidious advice, it was just and fair for the defendant to charge the plaintiff for the buttermilk drunk at his suggestion. We maintain that it was not just and fair to charge a ward so completely swayed by his guardian's suggestions for buttermilk so consumed, even conceding that it is right and proper to make any charge for buttermilk. And we contend that it is not right or proper to make any charge for buttermilk. It is not customary in Iroquois County, New York, to make buttermilk a commodity of barter or sale. Buttermilk is regarded as refuse, and thrown away, fed to hogs, or given gratis and free of charge to any human beings desiring to consume the same.

"Throughout Naso, and throughout Iroquois County, not any one can be found to testify that buttermilk is cutomarily or even sporadically sold. Such is the case northward as far as Waterloo, or even Rochester and Oswego. Such is the case southward to Watkins and Ithaca, nay, even to Owego and Elmira. Nowhere in this part of the world is buttermilk an article of commerce, of purchase or exchange. This fact is notorious. We assert it without fear of contradiction or of confutation.

"Such being the case, gentlemen of the jury, I have but one more point to make. I ask your particular attention, gentlemen of the jury. I ask the attention of all present. Fix your eyes upon the defendant. Will he dare to look me in the eye while I ask you, gentlemen of the jury, what I should call him? Were I to address him, what should be his name and title?"

At this point, Thaddeus Bowdoin dramatically paused. The fat defendant, to prove that he dared look Thad in the eye, was staring intently upon him.

Behind him Louisa Budd had leaned down and opened the cover of her lunch basket, as Bowdoin had uttered the phrase "fix your eyes." As he pronounced the word "title," she stood up, towering above the fat man. In her right hand she grasped a capacious crockery pitcher. She spoke with a loud, shrill, nasal voice:

"In the name of common sense I baptize you *Buttermilk Bailey.*"

As she spoke the words, she inverted her pitcher above Bailey's head.

When order was restored, when the cataract of guffaws had thinned to mere trickles of recurrent snickerings; when Zenas had been wiped off, and, soaking as he was, had reseated himself; when Judge Meddick had composed his countenance; when Miss Louisa Budd had paid a fine of ten dollars for contempt of court; when men could partially control their faces, the court settled down again to its routine.

Without leaving their box the jury brought in a verdict for the plaintiff for the full amount claimed, all costs to be paid by the defendant.

When Zenas left the court, he passed through a legion of boys more numerous than was normal, and yelling louder than usual. The tale of his discomfiture had flown abroad before him. As he stamped down the courthouse steps, as he stalked down the path, as he waddled along the sidewalk, as he made an effort to run across Main Street, as he unhitched his gray horse, as he scrambled into his buggy, as he fled down Franklin Street hill, lashing his astonished horse, he heard the new version of the old jeers. No mention now of the harness maker, no name but his.

"Who's the meanest man in Iroquois County?" the leader drawled shrilly. The answer came in one crashing nasal chorus:

"Buttermilk Bailey!"

Little Pierre

By Morris McDougall

Big lumber piles set on fire, machinery cracked and broken, foremen brutally beaten—and back of it all a man with the face of a cutthroat. This is the state of affairs in the sawmill when Little Pierre takes charge—Pierre who gives the impression of being "an effeminate, vain little puppy, without a grain of sense."

WHEN Pierre Campeau entered the office of Lazard et Fils, at Petit Castor, Quebec, and presented a letter from the firm's agent at Montreal, Emile Lazard glared, scratched his bald pate, and swore under his breath. Then he gruffly apologized, bade Pierre be seated, and surveyed him over the rim of his glasses with glum disapproval.

"I asked that fool of an agent," he said to himself bitterly, "to get me a man of strength, keen insight, and clear judgment. Such a man is essential in this crisis, and this is what he sends me."

Again he scanned the letter in his hand:

> Campeau is the man for you. Just leave it to him. Give him a free rein. I was lucky to secure his services.

Certainly appearances seemed to belie this assertion. Campeau was small, with a diffident manner, and a pale face which seemed to bear unceasingly a pleasant, bashful smile. His clothes were riotously gaudy, his true-habitant spirit apparently reveling in a profusion of colors. A great diamond pin shone from a purple cravat. His hands were long, white, girlish looking, and his hair, flattened low upon his forehead, glistened sleek and velvety.

As Lazard afterward said: "He looked at first like an effeminate, vain little puppy, without a grain of sense." But it would take no more than a second glance to show that his gray eyes shone with a clear, keen, unfaltering light.

Aloud, Lazard said aggressively: "So you are the new foreman?"

The little man, flecking the dust from his brightly polished shoes with his handkerchief, nodded and smiled.

"Did my agent tell you of the predicament we are in?"

"Yees, he say someding; a leetle," was the quiet answer.

"Well, do you think you can handle it?"

Little Pierre shrugged his shoulders, and again the deprecating smile parted his lips.

"One nevaire can tell. But I t'ink yees."

"You are the fourth foreman we have had in the last two months," said Lazard gravely, watching Campeau keenly to detect any sign of weakness. "I'll be frank with you. They all left because they were afraid of the men. I think I can safely say, without the possibility of argument, that I have about the rowdiest and most rascally lot of men in my sawmill that it has ever been the misfortune of an employer to have under his command. Dowler, the last foreman, a big, broad-shouldered Irishman—just the man you would have thought to keep the rowdy element in subjection—had his nose broken and his head slashed open in a

rumpus. He left even in a bigger hurry than the others."

"Ah, a ver' rough gang, eh?" said little Pierre, still smiling. It was as though he listened to a pleasant tale.

Lazard's brow knit in a puzzled frown. He was becoming a little more reconciled to the agent's choice of a foreman. Leaning back in his chair, he broke into a recital of his manifold troubles.

He told of the early history of his company, when the sawmill was very small, and only the villagers of Petit Castor were employed. It was by them alone that the white pine logs were cut in the woods, brought down the rivers in the spring by the "drive," and sawed for the English market at the mill. Then there was harmony of action. The business was prosperous; the workmen were moderately well paid, and were content. It was when the mill grew so large that they had to hire men from other parts of the province that the trouble began.

Lazard had not, he admitted, been happy in his choice of workmen. It was indeed a difficult matter to get good men to come to the little village of Petit Castor. Factions were formed. The villagers resented the advent of the strangers. They saw outsiders ensconced in positions which they considered it their birthright to hold, and their anger found vent in quarreling and even open warfare, while the strangers retaliated in kind.

At the shanty, during the past winter, a villager had been knifed in a quarrel, another had been maimed by a log set in motion down a runway by a log hewer from Montreal. One of the strangers had been blown to pieces by a charge of dynamite, which was originally intended to dislodge the key log of a jam above a rapid, but which was prematurely ignited.

"The unrest has not abated during this summer," Lazard continued acridly, "but the factions now seem merged in a coalition with the sole object of destroying my property. Of course, I still have some loyal men, particularly the villagers who have been with the company since it started twenty-five years ago. But for the most part the others are impervious to discipline.

"Two months ago they presented a petition. Their demands were so utterly outrageous and exorbitant that it would have meant bankruptcy for me to agree to them. When I refused they began a persistent campaign of annoyance. Big lumber piles have been set on fire, my machinery cracked and broken, and my foremen brutally beaten.

"Strange as it may seem, in spite of the greatest vigilance, I have been unable to find out who are guilty of these dastardly acts. They are committed with the utmost secrecy. But I have my suspicions, very strong ones."

As though fearful of eavesdroppers, Lazard drew his chair closer and lowered his voice to a confidential whisper.

"I believe that at the bottom of it all is a man called Christin, one of my saw filers. He has the face and the heart of a cutthroat. I have heard that he stabbed a man on the Montreal docks for some trivial offense—the fellow, I think, stole a plug of chewing tobacco from him—and I quite believe the story. Physically he is a veritable Hercules. He has been a trapper, guide, a log hewer, and a miner, they tell me. He is a human stormy petrel. He fears neither the law of God nor man.

"It was his brother who was killed in the blast in the log jam last winter at the shanty, and apparently the wound has rankled in his soul. I regretted the disaster exceedingly, and did my best to make reparation to the dead man's widow, but this fellow seems to hold the business responsible for the affair. Heaven knows I had no hand in it. I did my best to stop the quarreling."

Campeau nodded, for Lazard had a widespread reputation as a considerate, even generous, employer. The little foreman's eyes were glittering hard and cold as he listened.

"Why you no deescharge Christin?" he asked.

"To be quite frank I do not dare." Lazard laughed awkwardly. "It is a pretty pass when an owner is not master of his own business. Dowler

threatened to discharge him, and the next day at dawn the big Irishman was found wandering along the village road, dazed, and bleeding from an ugly cut in his head. Dowler was a brave man, but I really believe it was from fear, or perhaps shame, that he would never tell who attacked him. He left soon afterward.

"But it isn't the danger to myself so much as to the business that I fear. Christin seems to be a born leader. I could see when they presented their demands to me two months ago that he was the man they looked to for guidance. He probably framed the petition." Lazard frowned at the memory.

"I really believe that if he were discharged he could and would call a general strike. That I naturally wish to avoid. It is as I have said, a difficult matter to get good men to come to Petit Castor. I hear that he harangues the men almost every night at the bar of Larivière's hotel, in the village, on the rights of the workingmen, thus keeping alive the seditious feeling.

"Of course, I am not certain that he is directly responsible for the outrages that have been committed. He has, indeed, come to me and expressed his regret at the action of the men, but I always feel that the rascal is laughing at me in his sleeve. You have a hard problem before you, Campeau. Above everything, be cautious. Be sure of your ground before you leap."

Campeau was rubbing his hands together, as though pleased with the thought of impending conflict. He arose. Lazard saw power in the quiet, unassuming demeanor, even unsuspected physical strength in the movement of the little, trim figure, so gaudily arrayed. The little man turned at the door, as though a sudden thought had struck him.

"I am de boss—me?" he asked quietly. "I mean you geev me carte blanche —yees?"

Lazard realized with growing comfort how self-confident was Campeau's bearing. He nodded with sudden conviction.

"You rule the mill. Good luck."

Again the smile played on the lips of the little foreman. "Christin—oh, well!" he said, and snapped his long, white fingers.

With the advent of Pierre, peace settled as though by magic over the mill and yards, and Lazard wrote a conciliatory letter to his agent in Montreal. But the little foreman was not deceived. He knew this was only the lull, while the men took the measure of his strength. He felt himself the object of furtive scrutiny, as day by day he made his rounds, now helping the engineer to oil his engine, and now the rivermen to pole the logs from the boom on the river to the chain that climbed from the water's edge to the band saw on the upper floor of the mill.

Rough fellows of the woods, he found some of them; tough in brawn and sinew, bronzed by the wind and the sun reflected from March snows. These men were sound of heart, he told himself. He knew the type. They might go astray by false leadership, but would eventually veer into line.

He recognized another element, however—derelicts and ne'er-do-wells, the product of the slums of Montreal, Quebec, and Trois Rivières. Among these was bred the canker that had eaten into the heart of the business. "It will be a ver' long fight—yees," said little Pierre, with conviction, but he had no doubt of the outcome.

Pierre sought Christin among the saw filers. He greeted the habitant with easy good humor, oblivious to the sullen frown on the man's brow, and the gleam of suspicion in the lowering, dark eyes. In the heavy frame and crafty, penetrating glance, he recognized a dangerous power. The blood surged to Pierre's heart in a riot at the thought of a struggle with such a foe, but his guileless, friendly look disarmed suspicion of his thoughts.

That night, at Larivière's bar, over their glasses of whisky, blanc, and gin, Christin remarked, with a sneer, to some friends:

"Dowler had the brain of a bull calf,

but he was a man. This foreman is a baby girl. Lazard must be a fool."

The first shot of the campaign was soon fired. One day as he made his rounds through the mill, a great pine log hurled by a lever onto the band-saw carriage, grazed Pierre's side. His face grew white with anger, and he muttered "*sacré!*" under his breath, but to the sawyer, who had watched him with lowered eyes, he said quietly: "Dat was might' close shave, Dubois. Be more careful, dere."

At another time, by stepping back briskly, he escaped by the narrowest margin a load of scantlings that fell from a yard tramway overhead, and looked up in time to see Christin's veiled glance of baffled enmity.

When he received an anonymous note which threatened his life if he did not leave the mill within a week, he went at once to Christin and showed him the letter.

"Dat ees a ver' fine game you play on a frien'," he said, laughing heartily.

Christin's face wore a curious blend of emotions. The shaft had shot home.

"You t'ink I writ' dat!" he exclaimed, and for a moment his eyes blazed. With an effort, he recovered his composure, and assumed a confidential air. "Dey are a rascally lot," he said, "some of dese mans. You mus' be ver' careful."

"I t'ought you wrote it," said Pierre, "but, of course, jus' for leetle joke."

"*Non, non,*" was the answer; but as the foreman turned on his heel, Christin's brow wore a puzzled frown.

Insubordination grew apace throughout the mill. The foreman, in the minds of the men, was weighed in the balance and found wanting. Bolts were cut at night, machinery broken, and saws cracked until Lazard was in despair. Watchmen were increased in number, but these extra precautions proved ineffectual.

"It ees *certainement* too bad dere ees no clew," said Christin earnestly to little Pierre.

"Dere *ees* a clew, but not ver' distinc', yet," answered the foreman.

Night after night he himself spent untiring vigil in the shadows of the mill, peering about and listening for any sound that might betray the presence of the vandals. He had now entered, heart and soul, into the business, and was determined to discover and root out the evil. The lawlessness he knew was without just cause, for Lazard was a man who was always willing to listen to any reasonable demands of his workmen.

At last the energy of the little foreman was rewarded. From the head of a stairway leading from the floor of the mill he discovered two figures gliding past like shadows in the gloom. He saw them wait silently beneath the stairway as a watchman passed, light in hand; then they tiptoed away.

Pierre, creeping down, saw them place what appeared to be a charge of dynamite at the base of a band saw, and he grew hot with rage at the sight. He hid behind a pillar. As they lit the match that started the fuse, he recognized in the feeble, transitory gleam, one of the men as Dubois, the sawyer, a close friend of Christin, and felt a grim satisfaction in the discovery. The other he could not distinguish in the darkness.

The moment they were out of sight he rushed across the floor and blotted out the spark that was slowly eating its way to the explosive. The charge of dynamite was large enough to have wrecked the whole mill.

"Now de fun will begin," he said to himself.

Next morning he told the story of the night's adventure to Lazard. "To-day I weel deescharge Dubois. Den we weel see Christin in his true color. It weel be, I t'ink, one grand battle. But in de end we weel win." Lazard was not so confident.

When Christin accosted Pierre in the yard, the big habitant had discarded the easy, insolent, contemptuous tone he was wont to use with the little foreman. His face was aflame with anger.

"Why you hav' deescharg' Dubois?" he asked, his voice hoarse with passion. "It ees well for you if you breeng him back."

He was amazed at the calm retort: "Why? Dat ees my affair, Christin. Since when are you foreman?"

As Pierre turned slowly upon his heel, Christin gave a short, ugly laugh. Two or three men who had been watching with grave interest murmured among themselves: "Christin will perhaps one day kill that leetle man—but Pierre he is brave."

They began to realize that they had misjudged him.

The crisis came soon, and in a most unpleasant way. No other part of the mechanism of a sawmill is so dangerous to the life and limb of the operators as the edging saws, where the sides of the boards are trimmed. If the teeth are not filed with perfect precision, it is likely they will catch a board, with an angry snarl, and cast it from the saws like a bolt of lightning. Heaven help the unfortunate that stands in the way!

The disaster in this case could not, perhaps, be laid to Christin's door as an act of deliberate malice; yet it was his duty to file the saws, and the bent and twisted teeth told their story. The slab was caught in a sizzling whir, cast across the mill floor like a stone from a catapult, and one of the most loyal of the workmen lay unconscious and bleeding from a ghastly wound.

When Pierre rose from the boy's side, his eyes were misty.

"Christin," he cried to the filer, who stood in the crowd which had rapidly gathered. His voice sounded like the cutting of a saw. "You get out of here, an' eef I ever see your cowardly face roun' here again, I weel beat you wit' dese han'."

Incongruous as the idea of little Pierre whipping the big habitant must have seemed to every one, the filer did not answer, and left the mill in a dead silence.

Lazard was in a frenzy when he learned of the accident.

"I do not blame you, Campeau," he said, "but we will now have the strike that I have feared so long."

"It weel not las' long," argued little Pierre confidently. "There are lots more men we can hire from Trois Rivières. Besides, de men here hav' wive and children who mus' eat. Dey will come back soon, if dey leave now."

"You do not know Christin," said Lazard, shaking his head.

The mill was soon placarded with notices threatening all who continued to work for Lazard et Fils, and few responded to the sawmill's shrill whistle. Lazard had not overestimated Christin's influence over the workmen. The seriousness of the strike was evidenced by the battered appearance of the few who remained loyal. They were waylaid and beaten on their way to the mill. Pierre cheered them at their work, explaining that he had inserted advertisements in the Trois Rivières newspapers for men to assist them.

But now for the first time the little foreman began to realize how far Petit Castor lay from the beaten paths of men. Few answered the call. One by one the workmen deserted, until the day came when even Gauthier, a white-haired old culler, who had been with the business since its inception, and loathed the thought of desertion, was no longer at his post. The whir of the saws was stilled.

It was a week before the sibilant hiss again sounded along the silent stretches of the river, and the serpentine cloud of black smoke stretched from the great stack across the surface of the water. The lumber yard, again stirring with life, began to resound to the "pot-pot" of piling boards. Lazard had brought several new workmen from Trois Rivières, and under the protection of police from the same city, some of the villagers had plucked up courage enough to return.

Silently they drifted into their old positions, and little Pierre greeted them with his bland smile, as though they had never rebelled against his authority. But well the little foreman knew that this was not the end of the struggle. Christin was not the man to succumb so easily.

Pierre was, therefore, not greatly surprised, but quite a little disturbed, when he received an anonymous note, thrust

in the very early morning beneath the office door:

> There will be an attack on the mill tonight. Watch the village road.

A dim blanket of cloud lay close above the river and the low hills, and a mist of rain chilled the watchers, stationed among the piles. These stood out dark, incongruous shapes in the lightning flashes which momentarily tore great, ragged clefts in the clouds. Pierre, in the shelter of one of the piles, was eagerly watching the long, silent road leading to the village. Was the alarm, after all, a false one? It was now almost dawn, and no sound had disturbed them during the night, but the melancholy drip of the water and the rattle of the clouds' musketry.

Suddenly he became conscious of a report in the distance, and on the night air was breathed the distant echo of a drunken song that ceased almost the instant it began.

Pierre, creeping to the road, thought he could discern the faint gleam of swinging lanterns. They were coming at last! The whisper passed among the piles, and rapidly the waiting men converged to the point where Pierre stood. With short, low words of command, he stationed them in hiding close at hand. "No shooting—unless over dere head, for frighten dem," he cautioned.

A flame of lightning disclosed a dark mass drawing rapidly closer. The lanterns had been extinguished, and no sound issued from the oncoming crowd except the faint, dull fall of footsteps and an occasional imprecation as one of their number stumbled over an impediment in the road.

"Arrêtez!"

The mass came to a silent, wondering halt. Pierre stepped fearlessly into the road, and his figure was illumined by a brilliant glare from the clouds.

Eagerly, but incautiously, he drew near. When he spoke there was a low murmur from the crowd. He urged them to cease their rioting, assuring them that except for Christin, Dubois, and two or three others, there was employment waiting in the mill and yard, and that Lazard would listen to reasonable demands. The silence which greeted him he considered a favorable omen, but he was soon undeceived.

"Shoot!" shouted some one angrily, and Pierre thought he recognized the voice.

"That is jus' lak you, Christin," he answered, "you cowardly cutthroat, to shoot in de dark." There was a cry of rage and a rush of many feet. Instantly he realized that he was cut off from the lumber piles and that his life was endangered. With a shout to his friends, he ran toward the river's brink.

He laughed derisively over his shoulder at his pursuers, who were scrambling and stumbling over rocks and tree roots in their haste. In the darkness he caught a fleeting glimpse of a stream of men defiling from the avenues between the piles, and joining in the mad chase.

"Come on—quickly, Christin," mocked Pierre to the big habitant, who was now sprawling on his face on the river sand, but in an instant was drawing ahead of the others. Christin laughed in return, for Pierre was clearly headed toward a narrow tongue of sand which jutted into the black water and from which there was no retreat. But Pierre's mind was working fast, and his lips were set in a grim smile of satisfaction. He hoped that the end of the strike was now close at hand.

"Quickly—quickly!" he called again, as he slackened his pace, and Christin with a cry of exultation rushed upon him.

It was a strange, weird struggle on the soggy, yellow sand in the light of the few lanterns that gleamed like stars on the water. Rioters and police formed a silent circle, and watched the combat, their faces eager, excited, and pale in the white light. All instinctively felt that the fate of the strike rested upon the outcome of the combat. No one dared to interfere for fear of precipitating a general skirmish.

Like a will o' the wisp, Pierre skimmed about the sand, advancing and

retreating, deftly eluding the labored and ferocious attacks of the big habitant. Nothing could be heard but the heavy panting of the combatants, their low swearing, little Pierre's occasional bantering laugh, the tramp of their feet on the sand, and the intermittent, distant mutterings of the thunder.

Again and again Christin sought to grasp the little foreman, which, had he been successful, might have ended the struggle, but like an eel the little man slipped out of reach.

"He is a wonder, dat leetle devil," the watchers said, in amazement. "It may be dat he weel beat Christin," for the big habitant's breathing was labored and short, and the blood was running from his mouth and cheeks.

On a sudden the onlookers gasped. Little Pierre had slipped, and now Christin had cast his arms about him. They rolled upon the sand at the water's edge, and the hands of the habitant grasped for the little man's throat. But again like an eel, Pierre wriggled himself free.

The watchers in one accord, in spite of the antagonism of many of them, gave a little cheer. They admired the pluck and agility of the little foreman, but, of course, after all, such an unequal struggle could not last. Panting and pale, Pierre no longer smiled.

In a moment's stillness there was a dim flash, a cry of warning, and a strangled gasp from some one in the crowd. Pierre leaped back, and the knife that sought his heart ripped his shirt from collar to waist.

On the instant the little foreman's body seemed to whirl in the air, and his corked heel was driven with crushing force into Christin's forehead. The habitant gulped, and crumpled on the sand, his slashed face turned upward in the ghostly light of the lanterns.

"Good!" shouted some one. "Dat was a low, dirty trick, dat knife thrust. Bravo, Pierre!" They gazed at the fallen man with sullen brows.

The little foreman stood for a moment weak and trembling; then slowly made his way through the crowd toward the road. An instant only he paused.

"De mill start at seven, my frien's," he shouted. He knew that the reign of Christin was over and that they would come.

THE CURSE OF YELLOW JOURNALISM

THE tall, athletic-looking man, although well into middle age, was evidently full of vigor and ideas. Dawn was just breaking as he leaned against the side of a door in the newspaper quarter of San Francisco.

"I am the editor of a great newspaper," he stated, with grief, "and I know whereof I speak. The evil seed of yellow journalism has borne its awful fruit. I entertain hope no longer. The newspapers have gone to the dogs. Five years ago every woman who eloped or sued for divorce or got shot by a jealous man was 'young and beautiful.' That was bad enough, but the final blow has come at last. Now we see that every time there is an automobile accident 'the machine turned turtle.' Thus are variety and veracity killed by the reporters."

THE ABSENT-MINDED RECORD

DULUTH is the home of a woman who, in the line of absent-mindedness, has the whole world beaten to a finish. She is absent-minded from the time she wakes up until the moment she goes to sleep.

"Emily," a friend asked her on one occasion, "how old was your mother when she died?"

"I don't know," replied Emily sweetly. "You know she died long before I was born."

A Chat With You

WE have it always before us, the spectacle of failure, of mediocre accomplishment, of marked and signal success. The absolute failures are easy enough to comprehend. We know that James drinks too much, that he gambles whenever he has the money, that he works—never, when he can help it. We know that he is carrying too much weight in the form of bad habits, and we are sorry but not surprised when he staggers, stumbles, and falls, never to rise again. Then some few of the most marked successes are no less expected and no more surprising. We know that Peter can run faster than any one we ever knew, that he has a pair of legs, a pair of lungs, and a set of nerves like no one else, and we are not surprised when he comes in first at the Olympic Games. Nor are we surprised when Wilbur, who has always been a genius at mechanics, and who has worked harder at his hobby than ever we could at anything, suddenly soars into the blue sky above us, becomes world-famous as the conqueror of the air, and has medals cast in his honor.

FORTUNATELY there are few of us so handicapped as James with congenital weakness of moral fiber. Unhappily there are still fewer of us who have the legs of Peter or the genius and perseverance of Wilbur. The majority of us have our faculties bestowed on us in a more moderate degree. The cases of success and failure that interest us most are those that come to plain, ordinary people like ourselves. Paul and John both go to work as clerks in a bank. They both have good habits, good appearance, good heads, and good character. They are equally industrious. The start in the race is even. We wouldn't bet a dollar on either one. But behold! in fifteen years Paul, who has worked hard and faithfully, is cashier of the bank, is worth two thousand a year, has a nice house in the suburbs, and is prosperous and happy. And in fifteen years John is president of the bank, on the directorate of several others, helps to finance new enterprises. We couldn't tell how many shares of stock he owns in this and that, or how many gilt-edged bonds he has locked away in his safe-deposit vault. We know that he has one big house in the town and another big place in the country, that he has a steam yacht, a private secretary, and belongs to twenty clubs, that he is going to be in the next fifteen years one of the really great financial powers.

WHEN we first knew Paul and John they were as like as two acorns. How is it that one has grown into a comfortable fair-sized tree and the other into such a towering and lofty oak, a veritable monarch of the woods? We know how Paul did it. But how did John do it? Where did he get his start upward? Was it luck, or brains, or knavery, or opportunity? We have

often asked ourselves questions of this sort. There are no more fascinating puzzles and none harder to understand. Ellis Keene, the leading character in George Randolph Chester's new novel, "He's a Corker," was the sort of man who succeeds—something like John. He doesn't appear anything out of the ordinary when you first meet him, but as you know him better the conviction dawns on you that he is a little different from any one else in the story. He answers the questions as to what it is makes for real success in business. His system for securing control of all the grocery stores in the city is simple, but Ellis is the only man who could have thought of it. In this new novel of Chester's, which will appear complete in the next issue of the magazine, you will find business, romance, and real human interest. You will find genuine and lovable characters and vital human experience. Chester has written one or two other notable stories for us, but we think that "He's a Corker" is the best tale that the creator of "Wallingford" has ever produced.

THERE is another complete novel in the same issue of the magazine by Ralph D. Paine. If you have read Paine's earlier stories you are sure to remember Peter Burnham, the great pitcher, tall and lanky and silent. Do you remember the story, "The Martyrdom of an Oarsman," in which Peter, willing to serve his college even in the unaccustomed setting of an eight-oared shell for which he seemed much too big, met with undeserved disaster and annoyance? Of all the figures in that college life which Paine has recreated for us, Peter Burnham seems one of the most human, most interesting, most engaging. We have often wished to know more about him. The novel by Paine to appear in the issue of two weeks from now is called "The Heart of Peter Burnham." Peter is the hero, the central figure. It is the story of his life, his struggle, his disappointments, his success. It is the story of one who in spite of his humble origin, his grim aspect, his taciturnity, is a man, every inch of him. It is one of the best, most stirring tales that Ralph D. Paine has written. No one with any red blood in his veins can fail to be a little thrilled and excited by it.

THERE are two great Western stories in the issue of THE POPULAR out two weeks from to-day. "The Lost Village," by George Pattullo, is one of the strange, absorbing tales, unusual and surprising, that you will remember for a long time. The other, "Sociology at Snowslide," by Fred R. Bechdolt, is just as good as "Hendrickson's Golden Ledge," by the same author, which you will remember appeared a month ago. A good story of newspaper life is one of the hardest things in the world to secure. There is one in the next issue, "The Assignment that Failed," by Clarence L. Cullen. Then there is a funny story, "The Tricky Mr. Tannenbaum," by William Hamilton Osborne; a great story of the cattle business by Robert V. Carr, a big baseball story by C. E. Van Loan, a railroad story by Francis Lynde, and another funny story by Frank Condon. This, in addition to a big installment of a Chisholm serial, and several other good stories. Altogether it is going to be an issue of the magazine worth sitting up late at night to finish.

Come in and get warm

The really complete home has the air of generous hospitality. It is warm all over. Even the first breath of air from the hall causes the visitor to say, with Shakespeare: "The air smells wooingly here." Our radiator heating accomplishes that, and more. It puts cordial warmth into family life. It means hospitable halls, genial living-rooms, healthful sleeping-rooms, surely-warmed bathroom.

AMERICAN RADIATORS & IDEAL BOILERS supply these steady comforts, with the least expenditure of money and household energy. IDEAL Boilers are so easily regulated that they produce just the degree of warmth necessary for mild to severe weather. They bring no dust, dirt or coal gases into the rooms. Compared with old-fashioned methods, you get *full returns* from coal burned, while the entire house-cleaning labor is reduced fully one-half.

A No. 2-22-W IDEAL Boiler and 460 sq. ft. of 38-in. AMERICAN Radiators, costing the owner $205, were used to heat this cottage.

At this price the goods can be bought of any reputable competent Fitter. This did not include cost of labor, pipe, valves, freight, etc., which are extra, and vary according to climatic and other conditions.

AMERICAN Radiators are built in many heights and shapes which admit their location in any part of a room. They radiate warmth at the exposed points where most needed. Made in handsome plain or ornamental designs with smooth surfaces and bas-reliefs, which take the finest bronze or enamel finish in tints to harmonize with any furnishings, however artistic. Easy to keep clean; our radiator brushes reach every angle

Made also in special forms for ventilating purposes, insuring liberal volumes of fresh air throughout the building. No parts in IDEAL-AMERICAN outfits to loosen, warp, corrode. They have a popular reputation which increases property rentals and selling prices. Made in special sizes for cottages, residences, churches, schools, stores, public buildings of all kinds. Are you having trouble with your present equipment? Are you planning to build? In either case—write us about your heating problem. If you want cordiality and comfort united for family and guests, our booklets and special service (available in every section of the country) will be helpful. Inquiries welcomed—puts you under no obligation to buy.

Showrooms in all large cities

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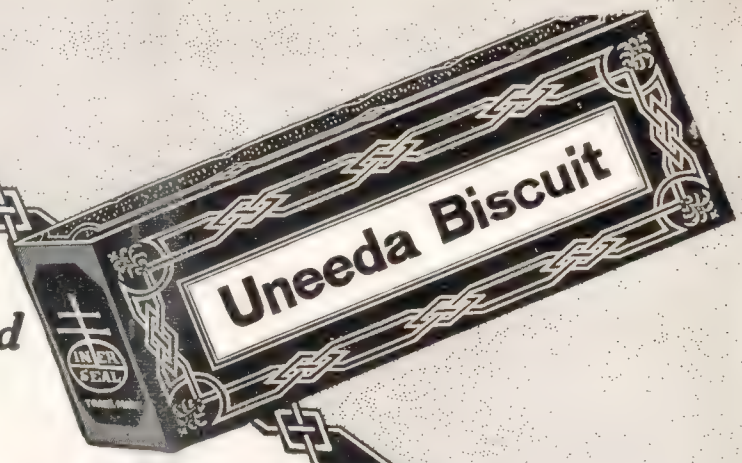

A Nation of "Rapid Fire" Eaters

The people of the United States are known all over the world as a Nation of dyspeptics. We don't take time to eat properly or to *eat proper food.*

Everyone would live longer—be healthier, feel better, do better work, and do it with greater ease if more time were taken in eating and more UNEEDA BISCUIT *eaten.*

UNEEDA BISCUIT are the most nutritious of all foods made from flour. UNEEDA BISCUIT are always fresh, clean, crisp and good. UNEEDA BISCUIT are muscle makers and brain builders. In short, the National Soda Crackers are

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In the moisture-proof package

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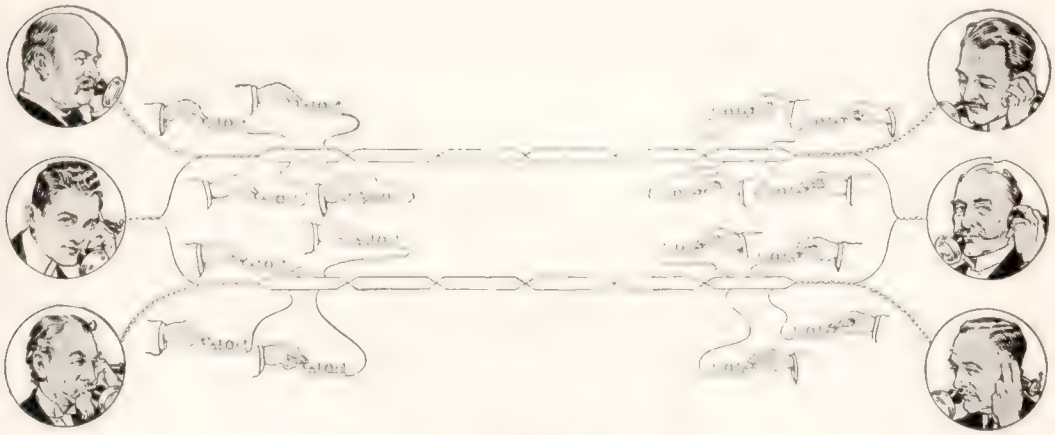

Double Tracking The Bell Highway

Two of the greatest factors in modern civilization—the telephone and telegraph—now work hand in hand. Heretofore each was a separate and distinct system and transmitted the spoken or written messages of the nation with no little degree of efficiency. Co-operation has greatly increased this efficiency.

The simple diagram above strikingly illustrates one of the mechanical advantages of co-operation. It shows that six persons can now talk over two pairs of wires *at the same time* that eight telegraph operators send eight telegrams *over the same wires.* With such joint use of equipment there is economy; without it, waste.

While there is this joint use of trunk line plant by both companies, the telephone and telegraph services are distinct and different. The telephone system furnishes a circuit and lets you do your own talking. It furnishes a highway of communication. The telegraph company, on the other hand, receives your message and then transmits and delivers it without your further attention.

The telegraph excels in carrying the big load of correspondence between distant centers of population; the telephone connects individuals, so that men, women and children can carry on direct conversations.

Already the co-operation of the Western Union and the Bell Systems has resulted in better and more economical public service. Further improvements and economies are expected, until time and distance are annihilated by the universal use of electrical transmission for written or personal communication.

AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY
AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES

One Policy ***One System*** ***Universal Service***

Tell your newsdealer: "Deliver this magazine to me each month."

A FORTUNE

The man with I. C. S. training has a backing of inestimable value. It is better than "pull," because "push" is always better than "pull."

I. C. S. training is a booster. It gives you confidence in yourself and gives your employer confidence in you. It represents everywhere the right and title to a better salary.

The most surprising thing about I. C. S. training is its simplicity—the ease with which it is acquired, and how quickly you can turn it into actual earning power.

A college education requires years of application and costs a lot of money. I. C. S. training requires only part of your spare time and raises no question about your circumstances. There are no classes to keep up with—you can go as slow or as fast as you like. It is as private and personal as a parent's relation to a child.

Read the other page carefully and act on it today. Every minute you lose is money out of your pocket.

IN BACKING

May Come to the Man Who Signs This Coupon

A fortune in position and power has come to many a man as the direct result of marking the I. C. S. coupon.

First: The man who signs the Coupon takes the first step towards realizing his ambition for improvement. Unless this first step is taken success cannot be achieved.

Second: In marking the Coupon he makes a definite selection of the line of work which he wishes to follow.

Third: The Coupon brings to him complete information as to how he may obtain the training necessary to achieve success notwithstanding he may not have had the time to attend school nor the money to pay for an expensive course of instruction.

All of this information has been gathered by the I. C. S. for the benefit of the worker who wants to change his occupation, or seeks promotion and a higher salary.

Remember that in marking the coupon you are simply asking how you can equal the success of thousands who had no better prospects or opportunity than you, but who are today occupying high positions.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 868 SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I mark X.

Automobile Running	Civil Service
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Mine Foreman	Chemist
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Concrete Construction	Commercial English
Civil Engineer	Building Contractor
Textile Manufacturing	Architectural Draftsman
Stationary Engineer	Industrial Designing
Telephone Expert	Commercial Illustrating
Mechan. Engineer	Window Trimming
Mechanical Draftsman	Show Card Writing
Electrical Engineer	Advertising Man
Elec. Lighting Supt.	Stenographer
Agriculture	Bookkeeper
Electric Railways	Cotton Manufacturing
Structural Engineer	Woolen Manufacturing
R. R. Construction	Toolmaking
Metal Mining	Foundry Work
English Branches	Pattern Making
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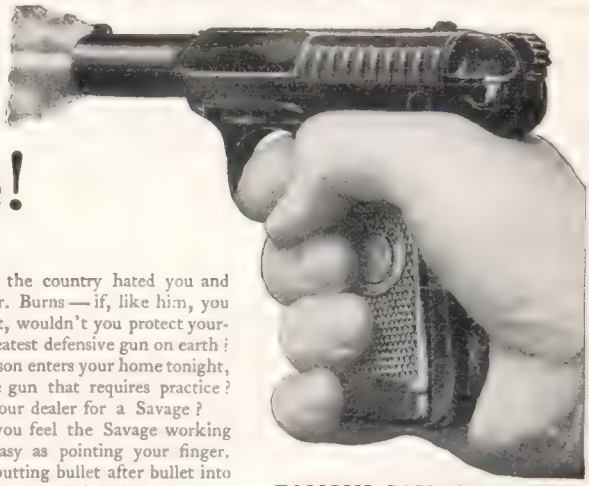
Tell your newsdealer: "Deliver this magazine to me each month."

In Peril, Detective Burns carries a Savage!

AIMS EASY AS POINTING YOUR FINGER



IF every grafter, every thug and every murderer in the country hated you and feared you as desperately as they hate and fear Mr. Burns — if, like him, you carried your life in your hands all the time, day and night, wouldn't you protect yourself, as Mr. BURNS does, with the SAVAGE, the greatest defensive gun on earth?

You would! But suppose a burglar or vicious person enters your home tonight, will your family have to take chances with an old style gun that requires practice? Or will you provide protection by 'phoning today to your dealer for a Savage?

Nothing can keep your enthusiasm down when you feel the Savage working in your own hand, light and steady. You aim it as easy as pointing your finger. Even though you are a novice at shooting, you go on putting bullet after bullet into the mark like a crack shot, eleven of them as fast as you pull the trigger.

Great detectives are strong for the Savage — Wm. A. Pinkerton, Walter Duncan, of Canada; high police authorities like Maj. Richard Sylvester, head of International Police Chiefs Ass'n; eminent crack shots like Col. Cody ("Buffalo Bill"), Dr. Carver, "Bat" Masterson, and many others.

For your dealer's name we'll send you a fascinating book by "Bat" Masterson, ex-Government scout, telling why the Savage makes *anyone* a crack shot.

FAMOUS SAVAGE RIFLES

Send today for new free book about the famous "303" Featherweight Takedown rifle ($25), the 22 cal. Takedown rifle ($10) and other Savage rifles. Address, Savage Arms Co., 9410 Savage Ave., Utica, N. Y.

THE NEW SAVAGE AUTOMATIC

Why Do You Keep That Corn?

Why do you pare it, nurse it, protect it? Why let it torture you? Millions of people simply cover the corn with a little Blue-jay plaster. It is done in a jiffy. The pain ends instantly. In two days the corn comes out.

No pain, no soreness, no inconvenience. No feeling whatever. All because of a bit of soft B & B wax. It loosens the corn while you simply forget it. In 48 hours the corn is gone.

Five million corns annually are removed in this way. Go get a package—stop that pain. It's folly to have corns.

A in the picture is the soft B & B wax. It loosens the corn.
B protects the corn, stopping the pain at once.
C wraps around the toe. It is narrowed to be comfortable.
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15c and 25c per package

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Sample mailed Free. (27)

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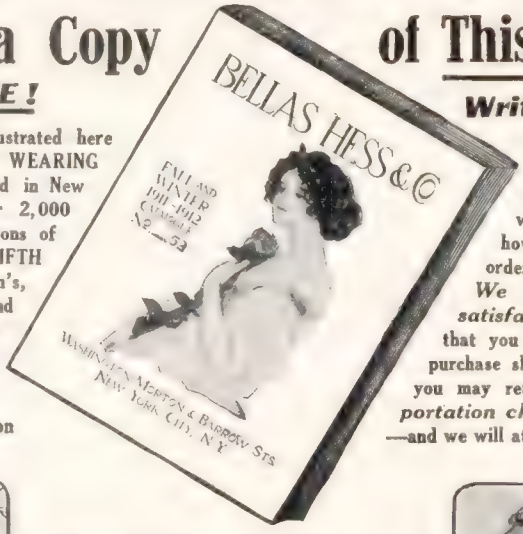

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We pay all mail or *express charges* to your town no matter where you live—no matter how large or how small your order may be.

We positively guarantee satisfaction in everything that you buy from us and if your purchase should prove unsatisfactory you may return it to us—*transportation charges at our expense*—and we will at once refund your money.

Suit or Dress $15.00

No. 1R50—**This superb tailor-made Suit** is made of fine all-wool two-toned Worsted—beautiful and very serviceable—in the new Coronation purple, mixed with black; also in a beautiful brown and black, gray and black, navy blue and black, and in **plain black mannish Serge.**

THE JACKET is a single-breasted model, fastening with four fancy buttons. It is semi-fitted and is 28 inches long. A most effective feature is the collar and Robespierre revers, which are inlaid with fine quality velvet, and trimmed with small bone buttons to match those used for the closing. The cuffs are of velvet to match collar. Jacket has two side pockets, and is lined throughout with Belding's guaranteed satin.

THE SKIRT is a new five-gored model, having a full-length plait down the front, trimmed with cloth-covered buttons with velvet centers. From a little above the knee, this plait is joined by a similar plait, as pictured, forming an overskirt effect. The back of the skirt has a full-length panel stitched down to perhaps twelve inches above the hem, and from there it is allowed to hang free. Bottom of panel is trimmed with six small velvet covered buttons. At each side seam extending from knee to hem, is a deep inverted plait. Model has an attached tailor-stitched belt, and closes invisibly in the back under the left side panel. Sizes 32 to 44 bust measure, 23 to 30 waist measure, 37 to 44 front length. **Price, mail or express charges paid by us** **$15.00**

No. 35R51—**A stunning one-piece dress, made of rich velvet,** in a beautiful quality. This dress is splendidly made and possesses all the aristocratic tone of a real Paris production. It has the popular Peasant style sleeves and is cleverly trimmed down front and around the hips with Silk Hercules braid to give the effect of a coat. The pointed black satin rever is used only on one side of the waist, both back and front alike. The piped collar and the V-shaped chemisette are of white Point d'Esprit, veiled with Silk Marquisette to match color of velvet. Over this is a chic little jabot of the same dainty Marquisette. Around the neck and down front the Dress is trimmed with Silk Hercules braid and soft silk braid buttons. The slightly raised waist line is finished with a heavy silk girdle cord. The elbow sleeves have satin band cuffs, with chic little plaited frills to match jabot. Below the Coat effect formed by the black Silk Hercules braid, skirt falls in graceful lines, displaying a panel box-plait both back and front. Dress closes invisibly in front. A row of braid extends from waist line to hips in the back, continuing the line of the satin rever, being carried around the side to form the coat effect. Waist is lined. Comes in Coronation purple (the fashionable new shade), with Coronation trimming, black or navy blue, with black satin and braid trimming; also in a lovely shade of golden brown, with brown trimming. Sizes 32 to 44 bust measure, 23 to 30 waist measure, 37 to 44 length. **Price, mail or express charges paid by us** **$15.00**

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WASHINGTON, MORTON & BARROW STS.
NEW YORK CITY, N.Y.

Wherever quality gathers—

White Rock

"THE WORLD'S BEST TABLE WATER"

Wonderful Bargains in Unredeemed Pledges

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Worth $35

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UNREDEEMED PLEDGE NO. 326798—¼, 1-16, 1-24 ct. Solitaire Diamond Scarf Pin of extra fine quality. Cost the original purchaser $45. Our unredeemed price..... $16.00

UNREDEEMED PLEDGE NO. 216493—A ¼ 3-32 kt. guaranteed weight Rose White Solitaire Diamond gem of most lustrous brilliancy, finest cutting and purity in a Tiffany ring. Over $120 value. Our special unredeemed price..... $59.00

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As the Centre for the Most Exclusive of New York's Visitors

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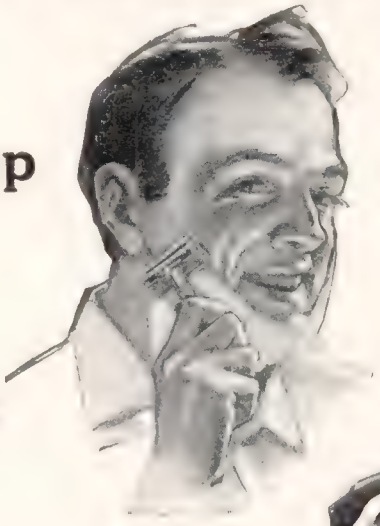

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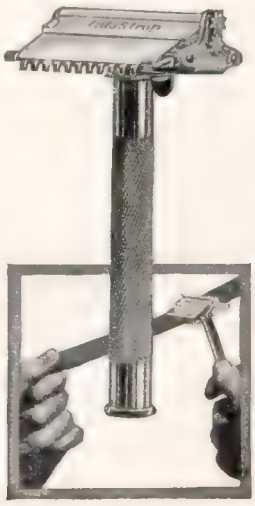

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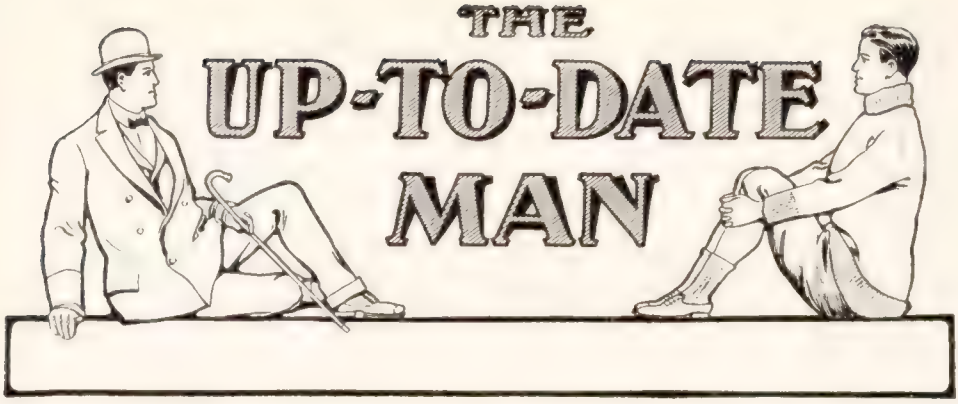


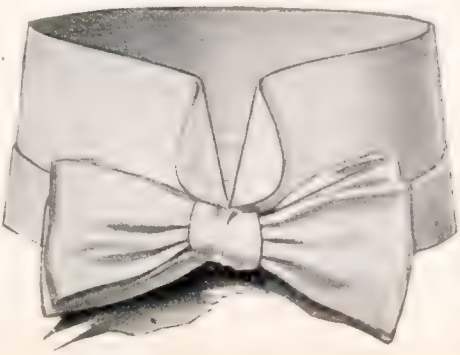
The readers of the magazine may write to this department about any problem of dress. Every question will be promptly answered, provided that a stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed.

CORRECT dress in its truest sense should be an exact expression of the wearer's personality. Like a mirror, it should reflect the individual—his tastes, preferences, and even prejudices. No man can be really well dressed if he slavishly follows the ideas of another, because all men differ in looks, poise, and ways of carrying themselves. Just as no two men are precisely alike, so should the dress of every man be distinctive and interpret his own character.

This rule, of course, applies more particularly to those articles of dress in which color is used—shirt, scarf, waistcoat, hat, shoe, glove, handkerchief, and the like. It also holds good with jewelry, which should be worn sparingly and only when it helps to set off and round out a man's appearance. Showy rings, huge scarfpins, and flashy fobs are seldom in good taste, though, as before said, it depends upon the wearer. Some men look best if they wear pronounced things; others are rendered disagreeably conspicuous if they depart from severe plainness.

Many inquiries regarding "some general hints concerning evening dress" show a widespread interest in the subject. The approved fabric for the evening suit is still black, unfinished worsted or English twill, and the surface of the cloth should be rough, rather than smooth. Square, notched lapels are newer than peaked. The evening coat must fit snugly over the back, and should be rather tightly shaped to the waist to lend that trim, well-knit appearance so desirable. Trousers are cut loose to give ease in dancing and lounging. Many men choose too heavy a fabric for the evening suit, with the result that it does not "drape" well, nor adjust itself readily to the curves of the figure.

As I have frequently insisted, the evening suit should be very plain in cut and devoid of any ornamentation. While "shadow stripes" and faint self-plaids gained a fleeting vogue a year ago in the younger set, they were not taken up so generally as to entitle them to be called fashionable. Far from losing its cherished simplicity, evening dress has steadfastly preserved it, and, if there be any attempt whatever at elegance, that must spring from grace of cut and perfection of fit. Inasmuch as the evening coat cannot be buttoned, and thus has no opportunity to cling to the figure, its square-shouldered, trim-waisted look can only be imparted by careful and correct tailoring.



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The Chas. Alshuler Mfg. Co.
Makers
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—black is not worn nowadays—are preferably single-breasted and pocketless. The pocket is superfluous, since it is seldom used, and, moreover, it hinders smooth laundering. The linen waistcoat is too stiff, and the silk garment cannot be laundered, but must be dry-cleaned, a tedious and difficult process. Therefore, the soft, cotton waistcoat will be found more satisfactory than either. This is cut at the front, opening in a shape midway between the

A Soft-Roll English Fall Coat.

old U and the newer V; egg-shape is, perhaps, the best description of it. The lapels are narrow at the top, graduating toward the bottom into broadness. The lapels and edges are silk-stitched some distance from the edge, and the bottom points are not so peaked as formerly. There are deep side vents, and the waistcoat hugs the waist.

The correct white evening tie measures from one and one-half to two and one-half inches and is graduated in form. While both linen and silk are proper materials, cotton is softer, more

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Please send me your new catalog and samples free.
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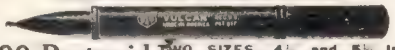
Moderate priced, easy writing pens that give satisfaction; unequalled for rapid writing and ruling



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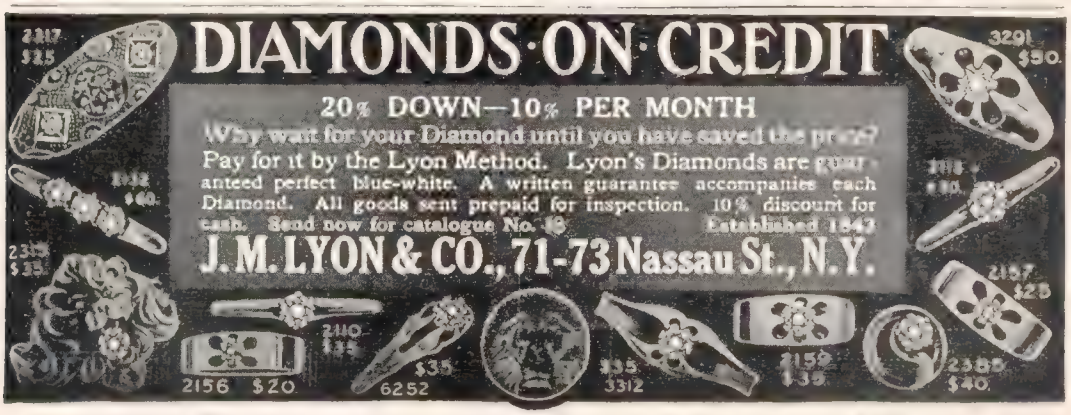

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pliant, and yields a firmer, fuller knot, besides being lighter and cooler. If a silk tie be worn, it should harmonize in shade and pattern with the waistcoat. Cords, tiny detached figures and embroidered ends—all are correct and a matter of individual preference. Lawn ties have been discarded, as the fabric is too flimsy for graceful knotting. In choosing the evening tie, the shape of the collar worn must be considered. If it be a poke or a lap front, the tie should be broad and adjusted straight across rather than pinched in the center. Contrariwise, if it be a wing—and the wing continues to be favored by many men who cannot wear the other forms with comfort—the tie should be modified "batwing," snug of center, and spreading of end.

The evening shirt may be plain, ribbed, or, if one must dress differently from one's fellows, embroidered in white on white. Few of us can afford the cost of a shirt with linen bosom and cuffs and a silk body, though that is the ideal garment. For the purpose of the everyday man, a linen shirt suffices, and, if one wishes to be "smart," the shirt bosom and the waistcoat may be of the same material. It should not be overlooked that the shirt affects both the fit of the waistcoat and coat, and that, therefore, it should be very carefully cut. Of the merits of the many devices intended to prevent the shirt bosom from bulging, the wearer must judge for himself.

The silk hat is the only form countenanced for general evening wear. The opera is a theater hat, pure and simple. In selecting the silk hat, becomingness to the individual, rather than style, is the chief consideration. Young men can wear the new shape with a "Frenchy," flattish brim, and look well in it, but most men should choose the more conservative form. This also applies to the opera. By the bye, always keep your opera sprung and not crushed, if you would avoid unsightly wrinkles, which ultimately split the material.

White kid gloves may be embroidered on the back with black silk or white, or may have "self" backs. The button is always pearl; a clasp is in bad form.

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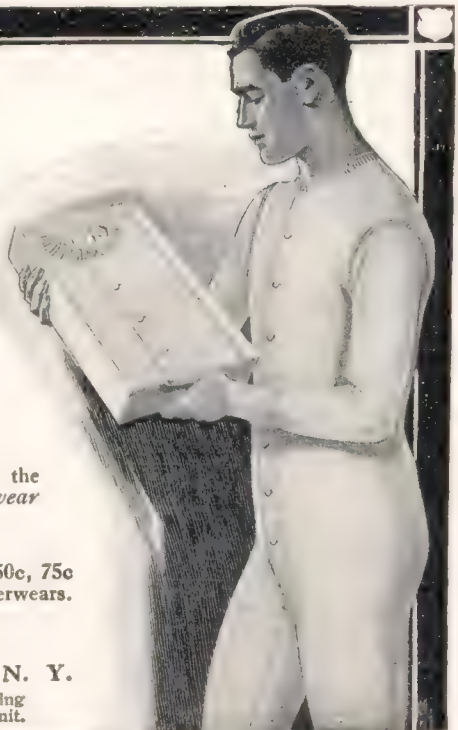

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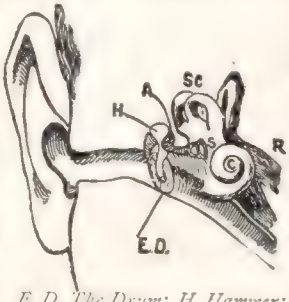

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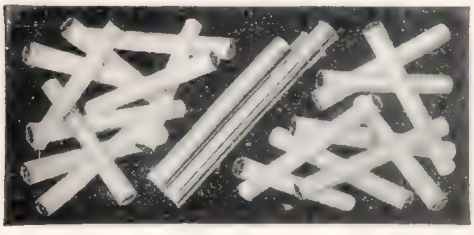

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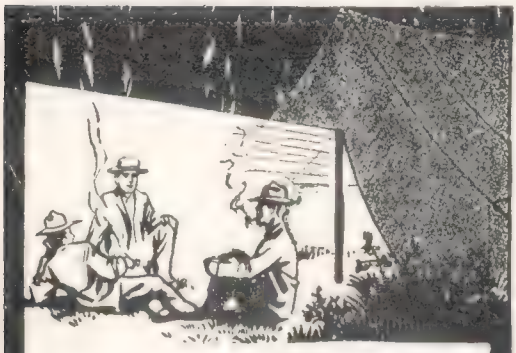

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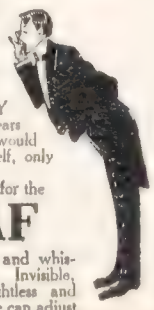

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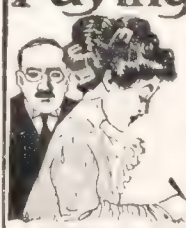

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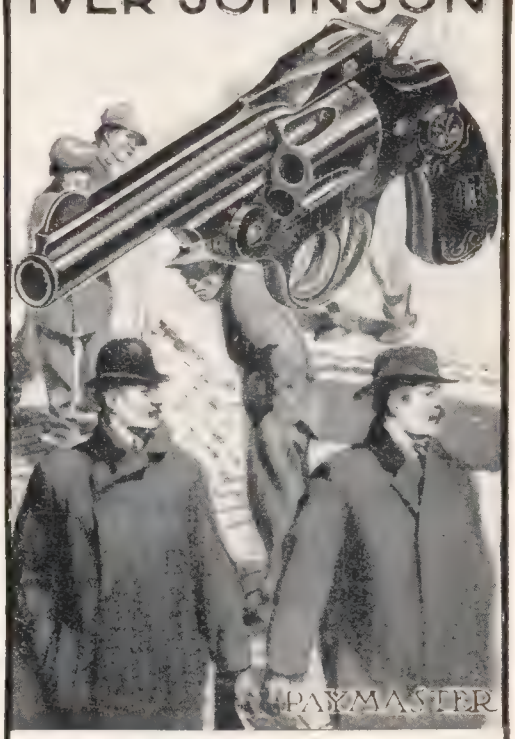

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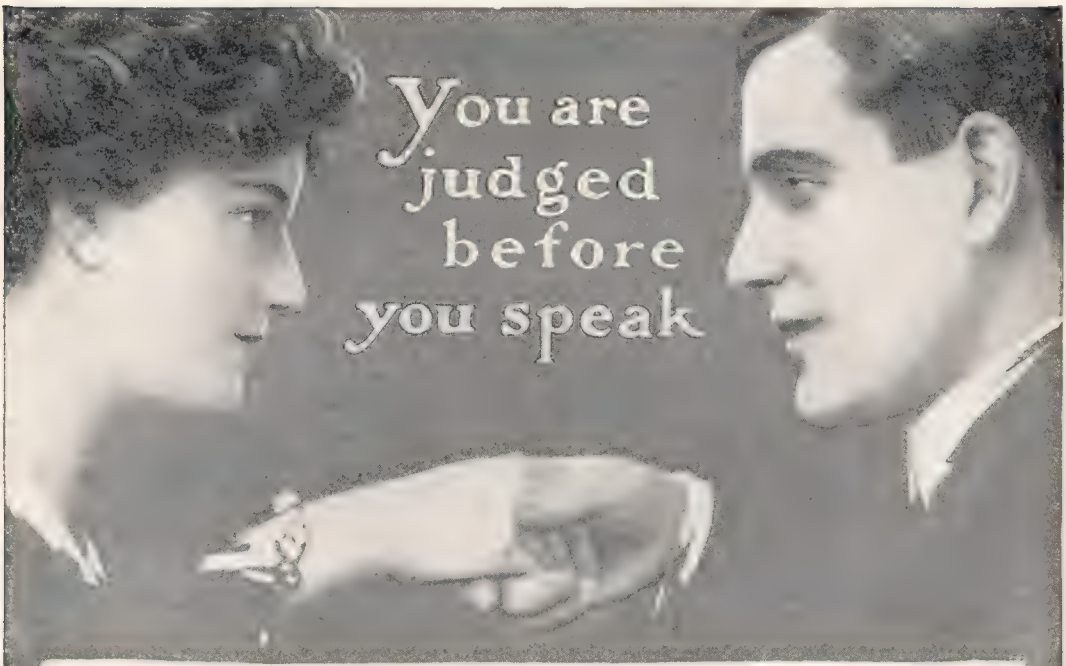

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